

The Final Awakening



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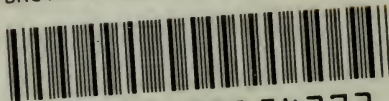


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THE FINAL AWAKENING

A Story of the Ku Klux Klan

by

EGBERT BROWN

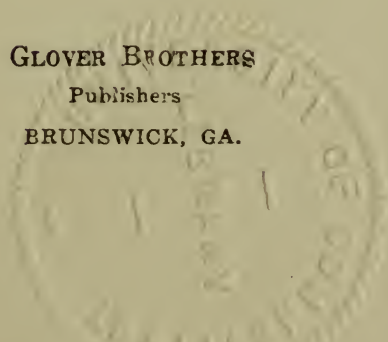
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FOREWORD

The sole idea and intention of this book is to convey to the alien world, from a Klanish standpoint, the true attitude of the organization toward those who are not eligible, by birth, race or nationality, to become members of the Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Therefore, should this story have the effect of bringing about a clearer understanding of a situation that exists today, even in a small way, then the effort will not have been in vain.

THE AUTHOR.

THE FINAL AWAKENING.

Hiram Washburn had completed the job of placing a new pair of half soles on the heavy, high-topped boots between his knees, as the tall, old-fashioned clock on the mantle above the big open fire place, struck nine.

This was the bed-time hour with the Washburns, and when the husband and father put aside his work, yawned as though straightening out the kinks in his lanky frame, accumulated from his bent-over position, shuffled over to the big clock and wound it, as was his nightly custom, no other signals were necessary to the members of his family, to remind them that another day had ended and Morpheus awaited to embrace them.

Without any other sign from the head of the house, the mother laid down her knitting and proceeded to shuffle the four smaller children off to bed.

Joe, little negro orphan boy, twelve

years of age, whom the Washburns had raised almost from infancy, had already succumbed to the pleasant warmth of the open fire and had to be aroused with some difficulty, after which he was hustled off to his quarters in the kitchen, there to piece the broken strands of his slumber and continue his loud snorings until four o'clock in the morning, at which time it was his duty to rise and make the fires for the rest of the family.

Joe, like all his brethren in color, was extremely fond of sleeping, and a warm fire, coupled with a full stomach of pop corn, which the children delighted in popping after the evening meal, only tended to increase the inducements along this line.

But there was one other member of the Washburn household who heeded not the bed time signal. This was Roger Wilson, twenty-two, possessing a tall, well-knit frame, acquired from plenty of outdoor work on the farm. His face would be con-

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sidered handsome, the high forehead and serious brown eyes, indicating unusual intelligence, the result of natural heredity and much reading and study, during all the spare hours of his time.

Roger Wilson was the son of Mrs. Washburn, who had married Hiram Washburn when the boy was ten years of age.

Roger's father had been a country lawyer, well on the road to fame, when the hand of the Reaper cut short his career, leaving the widow and son to shift for themselves.

The son had long nursed a desire to follow in the footsteps of his father; consequently, on the night in question, he was, as usual, reading and studying his Blackstone. This was a nightly custom with the young man and long after the rest of the family were wrapped in peaceful slumber, he could be found poring over this, or some other volume in which he was interested.

Among the few possessions left Mrs. Wilson at the death of her husband, was the small farm on which they now lived. Hiram Washburn came along at a time when the burdens of life were multiplying and when the hand and help of a man was felt keenly. They were married and the union had been fairly happy, considering that it had been consummated mainly for business purposes.

Hiram was uneducated and incapable of grasping the worthwhile things in life, but he possessed a kindly heart and generous nature, therefore things ran along very smoothly in the family. He was particularly fond of Roger and appreciative of his ability and usefulness on the place. The step-son was no less attached to the elder man and always held him in the greatest respect.

Country life with the small farmer takes on its activity very early; and daylight usually finds all hands ready for the task.

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It was late fall and the Washburn cotton had not all been gathered. The light frost was plainly visible between the long rows, as the members of the family, with the exception of Mrs. Washburn, alighted from the big farm wagon, with their sacks tied about them, ready for the job of picking the fleecy staple.

Joe had preceded the others to the farther end of the field. He had a reason for this, for hidden beneath the protecting leaves and branches of a cluster of bramble vines, at the roots of an old stump, he had spied a late watermelon a few days previously. Joe had been dreaming of this find and waiting for a chance to devour it, ever since the discovery. The fact that a slight frost had fallen during the night as well as he having partaken of a light breakfast, induced the little fellow to take an extra chance and scoot away to his treasure before the others overtook him.

Joe's unusual activity attracted the

attention of Hiram, who remarked: "That boy is up and doing right smartly of late. Guess he will be wanting to go fishing Saturday."

"No," replied Roger, "I promised him a new knife if he would average one hundred pounds per day this week."

While these conjectures were being passed, the little negro was hurriedly choking down the last of the cold red heart of the small melon, preparatory to the day's work ahead of him.

It was the fall of 1920. The boll weevil had hit the farmers hard that year and the Washburn fields were not excepted. The white, fluffy bolls were very scattering. In addition to this, the price had fallen very low; therefore, it was plain to be seen that hard times would soon be knocking at the door.

This grave situation was impressing itself upon the mind of Hiram Washburn and causing him some very serious thought on this particular

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morning. He was in the midst of this reverie, when Uncle John Henderson, the rural mail carrier, came jogging down the road that wound its way through the little farm. Seeing the men in the field, he brought his horse to a stop and beckoned to Roger to come to him.

The carrier and Roger were great friends, and being aware of the fact that the young man was fond of reading, it was a custom with Uncle John to collect magazines and other literature, from time to time, and leave it at the Washburn mail box. However, on this particular morning, he bore tidings of far greater import to the family than any which might be contained in the pages of books and magazines, as we shall soon see.

"And how is my young friend this fine morning?" he greeted, as Roger approached.

"Very well indeed, Uncle John thank you. We are trying to finish the last of the cotton picking—or that

is, that portion of it which the boll weevil has spared us.

"Looks like tough times in the offing, Uncle John," admitted Roger.

"Oh well," encouraged the old fellow, "it might be a great deal worse. The thing to do is try to get all the weevil has left and beat him to it the next time." John Henderson was a philosopher.

"By the way," he continued, changing the subject, "saw your gal while ago; and say, the sight of her makes a fellow feel young again. And the way she can ride that pony of hers is a caution.

These remarks brought a tinge of red to Roger's cheeks, as the old carrier knew they would.

"Yes, Uncle John," bashfully admitted the young man, "Doroöthy is a mighty fine girl all right. Guess there are few to equal her."

"And no superiors, I suppose," volunteered the old carrier, as he deftly

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unfolded his pack of letters and drew one out.

"Here's a letter for Hiram; might as well get you to hand it to him and save me stopping at the box."

With these words the carrier passed the letter to Roger, and with a "so long," and a gathering of reins, clucked to the horse and continued on his route.

Few letters ever came to the Washburns—particularly old man Washburn; and when one was received by him, it was customary for him to ask Roger to read it. The difficulty of reading with glasses was great and without them, it was practically impossible; consequently Roger was requested to open the message and make known its contents; complying, he tore the letter open and read:

Mr. Hiram Washburn,
Ridge Center, Ga.

Dear Sir: Your note for \$1,000 will be due May 1st. Due to the fact that money is scarce and we are being requested by so many of our clients to

re-new, we find it impossible to comply.

We are sending this notice now so that it will give you ample time to arrange for the payment of the note in full at maturity; failure to do so will necessitate our foreclosing the mortgage we hold against your place.

Yours very truly,

HAMMOND & Co.

This sudden reminder of more trouble had its effect on Hiram Washburn, causing a serious, worried expression to settle on his weather-stained face. He began to pace up and down the ends of the cotton rows, in a state of mental anxiety. It was plain to the old man as he scanned the devastated fields, that his "money crop" was a failure. It was very clear to him that after paying the fertilizer account, there would be little, if any, left; in fact, it seemed doubtful if there would be enough realized from the sale of the scanty cotton crop to satisfy the fertilizer notes, much less the mortgage held by Hammond & Company. These unpleasant

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thoughts were tormenting him, when suddenly it seemed an idea struck him. He called to his step-son to come to him.

"My boy," he began, "we are up against a proposition. Old Hammond will squeeze us out as sure as we live; and how we are going to raise this money by next May is more than I can figure, unless we do as Bill Meadows is doing—go to making whiskey. Bill seems to be getting along all right and the officers have never bothered him."

"But," interrupted Roger, in a voice full of surprise, "that is a violation of the laws, regardless of whether the constituted authorities do their duty or not. We cannot help it if the officers are lax, but we can so conduct ourselves that their duties will be as light as possible, by co-operating with them at all times toward maintaining order, instead of placing additional burdens upon them by infractions on our part."

Roger was both surprised and angered at this sudden and repulsive suggestion on the part of his step-father; and for the first time in his life he felt the respect he had always borne him, waning.

"Now, there you go to preaching," the old man shot back. "I guess you get all that stuff out of them pesky good for nothing books you been reading."

"There's Bob Radford," he argued, "getting big pay to run around over the country, making an arrest now and then, when everybody knows that him and Bill Meadows is in together; fact is, Bill told me so himself; and if Bill can do it, I can too."

"Well, Mr. Washburn, you may do as you please; but there are other ways of making money without going beyond the law; and you may just figure me out of it altogether."

The old man was considerably taken back at this determined attitude on the part of his step-son. He

did not like to think their places were being reversed. He felt that he should be the one to lead the way and the other to follow. He was much upset as he continued:

"Guess that Hamilton gal has made you think you are an angel and too good for most anything, and—"

"Just be good enough to leave Miss Hamilton's name out of this," Roger interrupted hotly.

At mention of Dorothy's name, the young man's anger increased and had it not been for the appearance of this young lady herself, galloping down the big road toward them, this, their first quarrel, might have developed into something more serious.

As it was, her sudden appearance interrupted the argument between them, and, regaining his composure as best he could, Roger advanced to the roadside to greet her.

Dorothy and Roger had been sweethearts since childhood. They had had their little spats as all lovers

have; they knew the pangs of an aching heart, as well as the sweet contentment and exquisite bliss that comes from reconciliations that follow.

Dorothy Hamilton, dark-eyed chestnut haired and slight of form, was very exacting; and it was said by all her friends in the little community, that she was the only person living who could make Roger Wilson "toe the mark." Roger, of course, denied this, as all lovers will. The truth of the matter was, nothing had ever come between them to arouse the sleeping pride that filled the hearts and souls of both—at least nothing of a nature sufficiently serious.

"Good morning, Sir Roger," she greeted. "I am out looking for a stray cow—old 'Muley'—the one who chased us over the fence that time. Have you seen her around here anywhere?"

"I am sorry to say I have not, Miss Dorothy," he returned, feigning her

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own airs, "but I shall be very glad to saddle one of the horses and help you look for her, if you will allow me to do so."

"You are very gracious, Sir, but I am thinking you have quite enough to do yourself. So run along now, and try not to work too hard. See you later."

With a parting smile and wave of hand, which sent the red blood tingling through his veins, Dorothy wheeled her pony and galloped off down the road, leaving Roger gazing after her wistfully, until she was lost to sight around the bend.

TROUBLE AHEAD.

Old man Washburn, with all his kindly heart, was extremely obstinate. It did not take him very long to reach a conclusion and then make up his mind as to the course of action, regardless of the nature of the undertaking. And once his head was set, no amount of persuasion on the part of his friends or family could induce him to change.

Hiram Washburn had not enjoyed the advantages of education and environment so essential to the formation of character. He had come along at a time when dire necessity demanded that the youth of his age and position must depend almost entirely upon the sweat of his brow for the necessary things of existence. And Hiram had existed; he had not lived, in the sense of the word as defined today. His whole world embraced the boundaries of the rail fence that separated his land from

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his neighbor's; and what went on inside of those boundaries was a matter that concerned him and his family and their welfare—the outside world made no difference.

True to form and his manner of thinking, about a week after the quarrel with his step-son, the old man began his new undertaking—trafficking in what is known as moonshine. He had chosen the small cotton house used for storage as it was gathered by the pickers, and which was situated near the center of his field. Here he arranged a unique set of signals, by suspending an old rusty circular saw to the end of a strand of wire, fastened to one of the projecting poles that supported the roof overhead.

It was not an unusual sight to see such apparatus as this on most any farm; in fact such methods were used for the purpose of announcing the noon hour or the time to begin work; therefore little or no suspicion would be aroused.

At each initial trip of his customers, Hiram would acquaint them with the code of signals, made by tapping on the saw with some metal instrument, and in this manner the resonant sound produced would enable him to anticipate their wants from his seat by the fireside, should visits be made at night.

Business boomed with the old man for several weeks after beginning operations. His was the nearest source of supply to the neighboring farm hands, mostly negroes, who composed his clientele. Heretofore it had been necessary for the thirsty to journey across the river to old Bill Meadows' place, quite a distance away; but not so now.

Hiram's eagerness for the illegal profit outweighed his discretion. The result was, the neighboring farm hands were making nightly visits. They would imbibe too freely; consequently, the following day, would report for work in such a poor physical

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condition until the effects would be noticed by their employers.

This was getting to be a bad state of affairs and growing worse daily. The negroes were becoming sorry and inefficient and the Washburn neighbors were beginning to notice it.

Dick Hamilton, only brother of Dorothy, had charge of his deceased father's plantation. The continual drunkenness of his hands was fast becoming a serious problem with him. He had exhausted every means known in an effort to induce the negroes to disclose the base of supplies; but there is a deep sense of loyalty in this respect, that runs freely in the black race; therefore the white man's efforts were in vain. They sealed their lips to all information regarding it.

Steady continuation of this new menace blasted young Hamilton's patience and filled him with a determination to locate the source and remove the cause, if possible. It was

this determination that impelled him one night to follow old Tom Jones, one of the negro hands, as he departed from the quarters in quest of the liquid fire, that changes the whole scheme of our natures and at times brings to the surface the hidden badness that sleeps within.

Careful to keep himself far enough in the rear so that Tom would not detect him, Dick trailed the negro as he shuffled along the big road.

A half moon was shining from a clear sky and this enabled him to keep the old darky well in sight.

Just before reaching the open fields of the Washburn place, Tom turned off to the left and entered a small wood that bordered on the farm. The white man allowed the black sufficient time to enter the wood and, keeping well in the background, followed.

The moonlight aided him in keeping the negro in sight as he continued his way, paralleling the road that

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bordered on the Washburn farm. Finally, he emerged and entered the open, Dick following. They were now in the Washburn field and nearing the little cotton house, which seemed to be the objective of the black man. Sure enough, the old negro headed direct for the cabin; meanwhile Dick crept slowly up toward him, careful to keep himself well hidden from sight between the cotton rows.

Could it be possible that the Washburns were supplying his men with the whiskey that was causing so much trouble? Surely not, thought Dick, as he concealed himself by lying flat on his belly; and yet old Tom certainly had some object in view that had impelled him to leave the warmth of his own fire side and make this journey at night, for as a rule, the colored brother much prefers to travel by the light of the day.

The old darkey reached the little cotton house and drew from his

pocket a rock about the size and shape of an ostrich egg; with this he deftly tolled off the required series of signals that reverberated on the still night air, from the old rusty saw.

He did not have long to wait, for presently the light of a lantern was seen to cast its sickly rays on the moonlit ground, as Hiram Washburn hurried across the cotton field, in answer to the familiar summons.

Dick crept up very close to the scene of the transaction, for he wanted to make sure of what would follow upon the arrival of Washburn.

Hiram unlocked the small door and, seeming to have anticipated the wants and quantity, passed a bottle to the negro, without speaking a word.

A feeling of both disgust and surprise filled the young man's soul; disgust at the nature of the transaction and surprise at learning the source.

The Washburn family had always held the respect of all its neighbors; therefore, this sudden enlightenment

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dumbfounded Dick for the moment.

At first a desire to rush out on both men, in the very act of the transfer, seized him; but upon second thought, he quickly decided to wait until the negro had departed and thus save as much embarrassment as possible for all parties concerned.

He had been careful to make a mental note of the signal used, consequently as soon as the darky was well on his way, and old man Washburn had almost reached the house, Dick hurried to the old saw and drawing his heavy jackknife from his pocket, succeeded in attracting Hiram's attention once more.

The lantern was again seen to swing about and the old man was soon on the scene again. As he approached, Dick accosted him:

"Mr. Washburn, I saw what just passed between Tom and yourself. I am very much surprised to learn that you are selling liquor to my hands. It is not only against the law, as you

are well aware, but it is having a bad effect on all of them. I must insist that you discontinue this practice, insofar as my men are concerned. I will not stand for it any longer."

"And so you have sneaked up here to dabble in my business, have you?" retorted Hiram heatedly. "Suppose I am selling your men whiskey; they are paying for it—not you, so what have you got to do with it?"

"Oh, very well, Mr. Washburn; I did not come here to raise a fuss with you, or make any demands on you, except such as concern my own welfare and the welfare of my hands."

Dick had become nettled at Hiram's attitude and his brazen audacity. He continued:

"But I want to say to you right now, that there is a way to stop this sort of business; and, if necessary, I can report the matter to Bob Radford. He is charged with suppressing such evils; but of course I do not de-

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sire to go this far with it unless you compel me."

"Bob Radford be damned!" retorted Hiram. "He knows it already and dassent do a thing; so if you are counting on that, young fellow, you might just as well get it off your mind. Bob Radford is a liberal man and loves a drink just as well as others."

"Very well, Mr. Washburn," replied the younger man, "that being the case, I know of other forces that can be employed which are at times, far more reliable and effective than officers of the law—especially one who passes up and ignores such offenses as the one you have committed, for the sake of a petty bribe, perhaps."

The old man seemed sure of his stand, as he tauntingly informed him:

"What takes place on my property I am responsible for; and no matter how much force you employ, it makes no difference to me. I will do what I

please and you can do the same."

With this parting shot, the old man swung about and made his way homeward, leaving Dick looking after him.

The younger man was filled with rage at the sudden termination of what had been intended as a quiet, peaceable and neighborly settlement of a condition that was fast becoming a menace, not only to him, but the other farmers of the little community as well. It was plainly apparent that it would be useless to appeal to Radford; the old man had as much as told him so.

Dick silently plodded his way homeward, racking his brain for a remedy that would put an end to such things.

He was familiar with the deep attachment between his sister and young Wilson; moreover, he himself had always had a high regard for the Washburns, as well as Roger, too. He was loathe to disturb this friendly feeling that existed between them on account of these facts; therefore he

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decided not to mention the happenings of the night. However, the attitude of old man Washburn and his defiant stand, simply meant continuation of practices which were steadily leading him to ruin, and these practices must be stopped!

Such was the conclusion of Dick, in spite of these troublesome thoughts, as he neared his home; therefore he would not allow them to interfere with the plans that now presented themselves to his mind, no matter what the result.

There was a way to put an end to it and he felt that under the circumstances, a mighty force other than that of regular constituted authority, as represented by Bob Radford, would be justifiable in taking a hand, the nature of which we will shortly unfold to the reader.

GHOSTS VISIT HIRAM.

A few nights after the run-in between Dick Hamilton and Hiram Washburn, which the old man had been careful not to mention to any members of his family, a knock was heard at the door. Joe, prompted by childish curiosity more than a desire to be useful, dropped his pan of pop corn and hurried to answer the summons. Cracking the door open, the sight that met the little negro's eyes caused him to slam it hurriedly and break for the living room, knocking down chairs and other light furniture that happened to be in his way, all the while yelling at the top of his voice:

"Ghoses, ghoses, ghoses!"

Old man Washburn jumped up and rushed to the front porch, quickly followed by Roger. As he stepped into the open, onto the porch, he found himself surrounded by a number of white-robed, white-hooded and

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masked figures, one of whom grabbed him, forcing him toward the front yard, the others quickly closing in about him.

Roger, grasping the situation, and in defense of his step-father, at this seeming outrage, tackled the white-robed figure who held the old man and snatched him about, demanding an explanation. The others quickly closed in on Hiram and rushed him off toward the road, about one hundred feet away, leaving young Wilson and his ghost-like antagonist scuffling furiously.

The white hood of the intruder seemed no handicap to his strength and agility and it was a nip and tuck affair for several minutes, with first one and then the other on top as they rolled and fought over the porch and yard.

Finally the superior strength and stamina of Roger Wilson manifested itself and he threw his silent antagonist to the ground and ripped the

mask from his head.

The man beneath him, and whose face bore the marks of conflict very plainly, was none other than Dick Hamilton! Roger was completely dumbfounded, unable for the moment to speak.

Meanwhile the others had returned with the old man, unharmed physically, but mentally almost in a state of collapse.

Not a single word was spoken during all these happenings. It appeared that the visitors each knew their parts well, and all the time was consumed in action—not words.

As a part of the program one of the figures in white produced a small cardboard sign, already lettered, and handed it to Hiram. At its bottom, was left a blank space sufficient for a signature. Another brought forth a piece of black marking lead, such as that used by shipping clerks for marking packages.

Apparently whatever had been done

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to the old man at the roadside had produced the desired result, for he took the proffered piece of lead and nervously scrawled his name in the space at the bottom of the printed words.

Roger, filled with sorrow and disgust at the recent happenings, had already left the others and proceeded to the little bench that stood by the well back of the house. Having realized the significance of the recent incidents, and the probable cause of them, he was now totally indifferent to any other acts of the ghost-like intruders. It was to him, a very unhappy and disgusting procedure and he was loathe to take any further part in it.

Complying with the silent demands of the visitors, Hiram was led out into the cotton field and to the little storage house that stood therein. Here they halted, while one of them securely fastened the written notice to the old rusty saw, leaving it suspended prominently, where possible future

patrons might have no trouble in grasping its significance.

The rays of the flickering lantern carried by one of the white-robed figures, fell sickly upon the following:

NOTHING DOING BOYS,
I HAVE DECIDED TO
DISCONTINUE BUSINESS.

Hiram Washburn

This portion of their task completed, they once more gathered around the old man in a semi-circle and with hands uplifted and heads bowed, they maintained this position for a few seconds, seemingly in silent prayer.

The leader then placed his hand upon the shoulder of Hiram, and with the other pointing towards the house, he was given a slight shove. This wordless command must have been fully understood by old man Wash-

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burn, for he quickly slunk off into the night, across the fields to his home; meanwhile the silent figures dispersed.

Roger was still in his position on the little bench at the well when his step-father approached.

The young man was much wrought up over the night's happenings. He was half angry and half sorry—angry at the thoughts of what had no doubt caused the unhappy disturbance, and sorry because of the altercation with Dick Hamilton. He endeavored to justify his recent position with the thoughts that his attitude toward the abductors had been a defensive one. They had been in the wrong and had undertaken to correct an evil that should rightly be handled by the legal authorities. He argued with himself that these men had overstepped the bounds in their actions of the night, and he tried to content himself with the knowledge that his part in the silent drama had been purely one of

defense of his step-father.

Then, on the other hand, the boastful remark of Hiram that Radford dared not interfere with the business he was carrying on, rang in his ears, and it was then that the troublesome question as to whether or not those ghost-like figures had been justifiable in taking a stand in a matter that concerned the whole community, after the law's representative had failed to act, stood out before him, demanding an answer which he was not yet prepared to give. And too, Dick had been disguised and he had not been aware of the identity of his antagonist. These thoughts comforted him somewhat as he sat meditating over the recent events.

Hiram Washburn was thoroughly humiliated as he approached. His heretofore obstinate and boastful manner had totally disappeared and was now replaced by an air of mild submissiveness and keen remorse, as Roger accosted him:

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"This is a pretty mess you have gotten us into. Nice reputation the Washburns will have in the neighborhood after this."

"Well, my boy, I know I have made a mistake; but I am through with the whole business," the old man answered regretfully, "and I am sorry that I ever had anything to do with it."

"It is well enough to be sorry," chided the step-son, "but you have been violating a written law, made by the people and for the people, and you should have considered all these things in the beginning."

Out of pity for the old man, who was plainly filled with remorse over the night's work, Roger held in check the anger that possessed him.

"The happenings of tonight," he continued, "appear to be ample proof that there is a force, other than duty-shirking legal authorities of the stamp of Bob Radford, that may be employed to wipe out some of the ex-

isting evils, regardless of whether this invisible power is in the right or not."

Roger was now taking advantage of his step-father's mood to press home a short sermon.

"And even though the experiences we have just gone through with are both humiliating and distasteful, at the same time there seems to be a wholesome lesson back of it all, no matter if the actions of those masked men are questionable; and I think it will be a good idea for you to take the proper advantage of it."

This was pretty strong language coming from Roger, but his step-father's utter disregard of the crime being committed, in his past connection with the liquor traffick, had a tendency to cause the younger man to lose virtually all of the respect which he had hitherto borne him.

The unpleasantness of the night's occurrence, had, in one sense of the word, reversed their positions, and

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the young man felt entirely justifiable in the attitude he had taken, and the words addressed to his step father were spoken from the very depths of his heart and soul.

The old man felt the force of these words, but he did not make reply, only shaking his head sorrowfully and with an air of deep dejection, proceeded slowly into the house.

Roger sat for hours in the frosty night, oblivious to its chilliness. He had suddenly grown from a mere youth, as it were, full of only such fancies as one of his age possesses, into a full grown, serious thinking man.

And a thousand questions were crowding his mind—questions which he dared not answer.

Had this invisible force — this white-robed and white-masked set of men, been justifiable in their actions of the night?

What was this new organization—

this Invisible Empire, any way, and what was its true purpose?

Had this not been a case for regular constituted authorities to handle instead of these white-hooded figures who had taken matters into their own hands?

And why had he not been solicited to join this new organization of which Dick Hamilton was evidently a member?

And above all, what would Dorothy think should her brother tell her of what had happened tonight?

This latter question seemed to disturb him more than all the others. One by one they paraded themselves through the young man's brain and try hard as he might, the satisfactory answers did not appear to be forthcoming.

Roger was intensely religious, being of the Catholic faith, and his experiences of the past few hours, together with the troublesome questions that were annoying him, drove all de-

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sire for sleep from his weary brain. And the big autumn moon seemed to smile down upon him, as though she, too, were searching his soul for the answers.

PRIDE IS MASTER

Dick Hamilton bore the marks of his recent conflict when he arrived at his home that night. This was at once noticed by Dorothy as she accosted him:

“Why Dick! What is the matter with your face? You look as if a wild cat had tackled you.”

A half shameful smile spread over Dick’s face as he replied:

“Well Sis, it was not exactly a wild cat that tackled me; but I confess it was something just about as bad; it was that beau of yours—Roger Wilson, who clawed me up like this.”

“Roger Wilson! What do you mean? Tell me all about it, right now!”

Dorothy was trembling with excitement as Dick began his story.

“You see, it was like this: As you know, the negroes have been giving us considerable trouble lately. They have been drinking quite a lot and I

knew that some one in the neighborhood was supplying it. At first I thought of old Bill Meadows but later I had reason to believe it was coming from closer home. I watched old Tom one night last week and followed him, and guess where he stopped for the whiskey?"

"Why I have no idea," replied Dorothy, "I can think of no one about here who would be guilty of such a thing."

"Well Sis, you are in the same fix that I was; but all of us have lots to learn and surprises are plentiful these days. Te be brief, I followed him to the Washburn place."

"The Washburn place?"

"Yes; and I saw him receive his supply."

"Dick, are you certain about this?"

"As certain as I am that Roger Wilson is responsible for these scars on my face."

"Roger! Scars—! Explain yourself at once!"

"Well, as I was telling you, the

Washburns have been selling liquor to our negroes; and when I remonstrated with him about it, he flew into a rage and told me flatly that it was no business of mine; that I had nothing to do with it and so on. I then reminded him that he was violating a written law and that unless he ceased the practice, I would report it to Bob Radford, whose duty it is, as you know, to take care of such evils. The old man simply laughed at me and said Bob dared not interfere with him; that he was already aware of his operations; therefore it was plain to be seen that there would be no relief from that source; so I took the next best step and called a bunch of the boys together—the Vigilance Committee, and we called on the Washburns tonight. Mr. Washburn came to the door and while we were talking to him, your beau, Roger, seemed to resent the interference, with the result that he tackled me as you can plainly see,” holding his face up to

hers for inspection.

"It's bad business, Sis," he continued, "and I have never been more completely surprised in my life."

The truth of the matter was, Dick was still smarting under the pain inflicted on him by Roger; and therefore was a bit careless and elaborate in his statement of the facts to his sister.

"But the whole case has been tried," he explained, "and the sentence has been passed; and I am quite sure our negroes in the future will be a thirsty lot in this respect, in so far as getting relief from the Washburns is concerned."

Dorothy sat through these explanations as though she were dazed. She was very devoted to Dick. He had been father, mother and brother to her for many years and the affection between them was extraordinary, as would naturally be supposed under the circumstances. And what he had just told her had hurt her

deeply. Had this startling information come from any other source, Dorothy would have hesitated to accept it as truthful.

It was humiliating and painful to think of Roger being implicated in such a degrading practice, but all doubt had been dispelled. Dick had spoken the truth and it meant the end of the world for her. All the hopes and happy dreams she had cherished so long, had suddenly been shaken and blasted as the storm wind shakes and tears asunder the petals of the rose, leaving the bush bare and ungainly. Hamilton pride had received a wound that no amount of time and explanation could ever heal.

Dorothy Hamilton required no urging, once she had seen the light of understanding. She was quick to act when action was necessary, regardless of the nature of it. Once she had been convinced of a thing, the proper remedy immediately presented itself; and what with the words of her

brother and Hamilton pride to spur her, she arose and went coolly to her desk, wherein was kept all her girlish treasures.

All the notes and letters, some dingy with age; all the little simple gifts that Roger had ever given her; everything that could remind her of the ties that had bound them, were taken from the drawer and carefully bound together in a neat package.

The last reminder to be placed in the bundle, was a picture of Roger that had been made when he had donned his first long trousers. This she held before her for many seconds, reluctant to part with it; but finally, eyes shining with the fires of prideful determination, it was placed among the rest of the things that had been her most priceless treasures.

Pride is a compelling monster at times and when he fastens his grip upon us, cool judgment and common sense are brushed lightly aside. This mighty force now held Dorothy in its

thrall and urged her on.

With slightly trembling hand and cold determination, she produced pen and paper and wrote:

Dear Mr. Wilson:

Dick has told me all; therefore it is unnecessary to go into details. I am surprised and astounded at your behavior and amazed at my own misjudgment of your character, after all these years of our friendship.

I am returning to you all the little erstwhile treasures that might remind me of the happy past and request that our friendship cease.

It will not be necessary, in the face of what Dick has already told me, for you to make any further explanations.

Respectfully,

DOROTHY HAMILTON.

Having completed this sorrowful task, which meant the end of her happiness, Dorothy retired to her bed, but not to sleep; and the same big smiling moon that was peeping down upon Roger Wilson, was also casting her silvery rays through the half raised curtains and training them on a grief-stricken form as though aware of the

anguish of her heart. For the tense strain had broken and, like all her kindred, Dorothy was finding comfort in a flood of consoling tears.

Early the next morning, after a night of sleeplessness, she gathered together the package and letter and dispatched them to the Washburn home by one of the negro farm hands.

Roger received the package exultantly. It was the custom with his sweetheart to remember him at times when extra nice cakes and sweets had been prepared by her, and on this particular morning the remembrance would indeed be sweeter and far more pleasing than the objects themselves.

Taking the letter from the darkey's hand, Roger eagerly opened it and devoured its contents.

At first he was dumfounded, but gathering his wits together which had been dulled to some extent by a sleepless night, he read again for the second time, carefully, though painfully.

The blood slowly mounted to his cheeks, flushing them with an uncontrollable anger. The full significance of the message at last dawned upon him and there could be no mistake as to its meaning.

Dorothy had simply tried and convicted him without giving him a chance to make a defense. She had, at one stroke of the pen, and for the time being, robbed him of all his hopes and happiness, and he was wounded sorely; but deep rooted in the mind and soul of Roger Wilson, was imbedded by nature and the laws of heredity, a keen sense of justice, as well as pride.

He, too, possessed a spirit as proud as a Caesar or an Antony; and this wrong that had suddenly been done him by one to whom he would smilingly have given his very heart's blood, seemed to kindle into a raging flame, all the fires of his nature.

Without so much as opening the

package that accompanied the letter, he hurled it violently into the open fire and watched the hungry flames devour it, as a ferocious lion, with its death wound, watches the taking away of its mate.

Grim determination; the sense of injustice; pride—all seemed to lay hold upon him at once, as with slow, almost painful step, he proceeded to his little home-made desk that had served him since childhood, and with set jaw and steady hand, he penned his reply to the message that had, for a moment, cast him into the deepest gloom:

Dear Miss Hamilton:

Your note and package received.

I too, am deeply surprised and hurt at this sudden attitude on your part; however, since you seem to take the position that you are justifiable in condemning me without a trial; and since it is your wish that our friendship cease, same is hereby granted.

Should the time ever come when explanations are in order, I feel that you must be the one to make them.

Respectfully,

ROGER WILSON.

The letter finished, Roger called

Joe and dispatched him off to the Hamilton place to deliver it.

The little negro had become familiar with old man Washburn's operations; and more than once he had slipped into the cotton house when opportunity presented itself, and, from inherent force of nature or otherwise, had learned to sip the contents of one of the bottles therein, which he had buried deep in the fluffy staple for future occasions.

Joe had to pass the little house on his way to the Hamilton place and a longing desire for a taste of the hidden liquor seized him; consequently, he opened the door, which was no longer being kept locked, slipped into the house and dug out the bottle from its hiding place.

In his hurry to complete his intentions before any one should detect him, he turned it up and took a drink that was calculated to have considerable effect on one of his tender age. The result was that when he arrived

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at the Hamilton house, he was in such happy spirits until his capers were at once noticed by Dorothy and served to add additional strength to what Dick had already told her.

But somehow she had expected a different reply from Roger. It was not like him to take such a defiant stand. In fact she had half hoped the young man would come to her instead of writing. A cold shiver of doubt swept her as she finished the message.

Could it be after all, that she had been too hasty and a bit unfair in her attitude toward him?

Would it not have been better had she requested him to come to her and hear his explanation?

But Dick had told her the truth and that settled it.

But why had Roger not ignored her message and defied her in another manner, by hurrying to her?

She had half expected he would do this.

But, no. He had accepted her at

her word, and his cool, calculating reply was eating itself into her very heart and soul. It simply meant the end of everything!

She tried to console herself with the thought that, after all, she had done the only correct thing under the circumstances. She had taken a stand that was proper, according to what her brother had told her, concerning the entire matter.

Then Doubt, that hideous old monster that stands in the forks of the road and beckons to the wanderer—first to the right then to the left, then suddenly disappears, leaving him standing alone to make the calculations and decisions himself, had suddenly loomed up in front of Dorothy, in the very midst of her tormenting questions, and as suddenly disappeared, leaving no answers.

A great battle was raging in her soul. Two mighty forces were fighting for supremacy; and time alone would be the deciding judge as to which would be the final victor.

NEW PROBLEMS ARISE.

Life for Roger Wilson had lost a great deal of its meaning during the past few days; but he was not one to surrender without first engaging in conflict. The grievous injustice that had been meted out to him served only to spur him on to bigger things.

There are times in a human life when disappointment and sorrow act as a tonic to ambition and energy, and he was in the midst of a crisis which would decide his whole future. He was at the turning point—the cross-roads.

He realized that it would be folly to remain in the community, surrounded by the recent results of the circumstances he had just passed through; therefore, without further ado, he made up his mind to leave.

But where would he go?

What would he do?

His finances were not sufficient to complete a course in law. It was

true he was fairly familiar with the rudiments of the profession, due to his studies in his spare moments; but he was not fitted to enter the practice without the help and guidance of those more capable than he. But since it had been the dream of his short life to one day follow in the footsteps of his father, and, standing as he now was at the cross roads of life, it was only natural that his mind was soon made up.

When Roger made known his intentions to his mother, this gentle old soul was rather pleased. She had long hoped for the day when her son would get away from the dullness and insignificance of the daily life of the little community, and strike out for himself. But when he acquainted his step-father with his decision, it was a different matter. The old man was cognizant of his step-son's usefulness on the little farm and therefore was reluctant to see his mainstay leave. Furthermore, Hiram Wash-

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burn realized it was mainly his own actions that had brought about this sudden turn of affairs and it was he who was filled with the greatest sorrow when Roger finally bade them farewell.

Joe had learned of the young man's intentions and was moved to tears as Roger took him by the hand and gently patted the little negro's shoulder while saying good bye to him.

Joe was deeply attached to Roger and his leaving meant the loss of his best friend. But his sorrow was considerably assuaged when the young man dug into his pocket and placed a large sized penny into the little fellow's hand—their luck piece, Joe had called it and the one thing above all others he had coveted.

“Now, Joe, I want you to be a good boy,” he told him at parting. “Be good to mother and the children, and when trouble comes creeping upon you, you can rub it all away with this luck piece; and when you want something

good to happen, remember to rub the big Indian's head. When you want to scare away trouble, rub the other side."

Roger was very solemn during this parting advice to the little negro. He knew of the superstition that lies in the hearts of all of his kind, and he did not wish to disillusion the little fellow, but rather to lend encouragement to his beliefs.

"I sho is glad to git dis penny, Mr. Roger; I knows it will do de business, and when I feels lack you is in a tight place, Ise gwiner rub dem Injun ar-rers till dey feels it."

"All right, Joe; but I hope I won't get in any tighter places than the one I am in now." And with these parting words, he struck out on his journey that led into a new world, full of both sorrow and anticipation.

It was necessary for Roger to pass the Hamilton place on his way to the little railway station, some three miles distant. His step father had

offered to take him to the village in the buggy but the young man wished to walk; and if his shoulders were slightly stooped from the load of trouble that was his, it was not so as he neared the home of Dorothy, erect of carriage and brisk of step.

Dorothy had spied him coming along the big road. At first she half hoped he was on his way to her; however, noting the handbag he carried, it dispelled all doubts of this nature and acquainted her at once with his intentions. Forthwith, she hurried into the house, took her seat by one of the front windows and with curtains slightly drawn, watched him as he passed, without once turning his head in her direction.

A great longing seized her—a longing to rush out and stop him. Love urged and tugged at her on one side, as only love can do; and for a second, she was about to answer the great call—the call of the soul; but the iron hand of pride clutched her in its

mighty grip and held her fast until the object of her vision had disappeared over the hill beyond.

John Henderson was jogging along the road, deeply engrossed in his paper. He did not see Roger until that young man was right upon him.

"Hello, Uncle John!" yelled Roger; "must be interesting news you are reading."

The old carrier quickly yelled "whoa" and brought the horse to a stop.

"Well, for the land's sake, boy; where are you going?"

"Hardly know myself, Uncle John; but I am on my way, perhaps to Atlanta. I suppose you have heard the news?"

"Well, yes," slowly replied the old carrier, as though in doubt as to what the younger man had reference to, "if you mean about the visit the white caps paid Hiram."

"By the way, Roger," he continued, "them fellows cleaned out old Bill

Meadows last night; just passed Rube Johnson while ago and Rube says they scared Bill so badly until he wanted to sign away everything he had; but of course all they wanted him to sign was a pledge that he would stop monkeying with moonshine. Rube says he signed it in a hurry. Don't know but the boys are doing some good work for the community, after all. You know it is whispered that Bob Radford refused to make a case against old Bill. They say Bob was getting some of the dividends, but of course this is all hearsay."

"But what is this Ku Klux Klan, and where does it get its authority?" asked Roger.

"The Lord knows, my boy; but they seem to have plenty of it; you seldom hear of their operations except in cases like those mentioned; and it is said it gets its power, and commands respect from the fact that no one on the outside seems to know the identity of its members.

"Anyway," the old carrier continued, "anything that is strong enough to scare old Bill Meadows out of the whiskey traffick, must be a mighty good proposition."

"Perhaps so, Uncle John; perhaps so; at least it looks that way."

"But why are you leaving my boy, and where are you going? That Hamilton gal will be mighty lonesome without you, and when a gal her age gets lonesome, it isn't long before she finds company."

"Maybe so, Uncle John; maybe so. But she is through with my company and it's all because of Mr. Washburn's mess. She evidently thinks I was connected with it, because Dick and I had a set-to the night they came to our house. Anyway, she has convicted me without a trial and the sentence has already been passed."

This portion of Roger's conversation caused the old man to chuckle audibly as he replied:

"Well, well, well! So that's it, is

it? And you have accepted the verdict without putting up a defense—or even insisting on one?”

“Had to, under the circumstances, Uncle John.”

“Well, my boy; if you knew women as I do, you would have pursued a different course. You see, when a gal makes up her mind that she must take some sort of action in a case like yours, the first thing she thinks of is to do something to hurt her beau’s feelings and get him all riled up; so she sits down and writes him a stiff letter to make him understand that she holds the whip handle. She informs him that it is all over between them and she never wants to see him again; and you must let her think she is right and allow her to have her way about it, too. But land’s sake, boy; she don’t mean a bit of it, and she expects her beau to come running to her, begging forgiveness; and if that beau has had any experience with them before, he will do well to hurry

to her side. And sometimes, when this scheme fails to work, she will find other ways to reach him, even though she may have to go herself if she loves him very much; and when you find one like this, she is worth having, because she will work single or double. I know 'em, my boy; I know 'em. They are just like colts. You have to break them to harness."

Roger listened very intently to his old friend's advice and information and perhaps his load was somewhat lightened at the encouraging words.

"But, Uncle John; I am not guilty of anything and therefore Dorothy must find a way to reach me—"

"And I am thinking she will," interrupted his friend, "but she is a mighty fine gal even if she is a bit high strung, and I am just thinking that maybe if I were you, I wouldn't let it run too far and take too many chances on it, for of course you find one now and then that you can't tell what they will do.

"Anyhow," the old carrier advised, "don't let this thing upset your calculations. You go right to Colonel Fred Brewster's office. He is the best lawyer in Atlanta and a good friend of mine; and if you are pretty well up on your Blackstone, the sailing will be easy. I will give you a note to Fred and I am sure you will have no trouble getting into his office on some kind of basis.

"Meanwhile, I will keep my eye on the gal, and if the symptoms begin to warrant it, I'll try and see if I can't bring her around to the sensible way of looking at it. Yes, my boy, I know 'em; but it will be best to give her plenty of time."

"Well, Uncle John," half-heartedly, "so far as I am concerned, she can have as much time as she desires."

But these last words of Roger's only caused the old man to raise his eyes a bit, and the knowing smile that played about the corners of his mouth, indicated the doubt in his

mind as to the genuineness of the young man's statement.

John Henderson took from his pocket a piece of note paper and with his bended knee for a rest, wrote a few lines on it and passed it to Roger.

"Take this to Fred Brewster," he said, "and tell him your wishes. I am sure he will give you a chance."

Roger was deeply grateful to his old friend and made him to understand it as he bade him good-bye.

With a promise to write to him occasionally and assuring his friend that the mistreatment he had received at the hands of Dorothy would in no way hamper him in his intentions and ambitions, he was on his way to the little station, where he would board the train for Atlanta and the many new experiences that awaited him in that big, hustling metropolis.

QUESTIONS ARISE.

The trip to the city was uneventful. The train was crowded with passengers, all of whom seemed restless and impatient to reach their destinations.

A news-butcher came wobbling through the car, reeling from side to side, in his efforts to keep pace with the rolling, swaying coach. In his arms he carried a large bundle of newspapers, all the while gurgling:

"All the latest news about the Mer Rouge case!"

Roger purchased a paper, across the top of which was streamed in large black type:

"TWO MEN MURDERED BY MEMBERS OF
KU KLUX KLAN"

He was much absorbed and interested in the news. The article went on to state that the bodies of two well known men of Mer Rouge, Louisiana, had been recovered from Lake

La Fourche, and their condition showed that they had been tortured and badly mutilated before being murdered and weighted down in the lake.

The evidence pointed toward the fact that this horrible crime had been committed by hooded members of the Ku Klux Klan and continued by saying that in due time the guilty parties would be brought to justice.

This news disturbed Roger very much. His late experience had left him with the idea that this new organization, known as the Invisible Empire, was a power for good instead of evil; and it appeared that his opinion was about to be reversed, if the news he had just read could be depended upon; it set him in doubt, and all during the long journey, he allowed his thoughts to dwell on this new and perplexing question. And he longed for further proof that would finally set him right.

It was late in the night when the

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train carrying Roger arrived in the big terminal station. It was not his first trip to the Georgia metropolis; therefore, the sight was not new to him.

Worming his way through the mob of taxi drivers, all of whom beckoned and squawked for the fare, he set out on foot to find a cheap hotel; for it must be remembered that he possessed very little money; consequently he must economize by spending the night at a moderate priced hotel and on the morrow he would find a boarding place until all his arrangements were made.

To the stranger within its gates, unsurrounded by friends or acquaintances, there is a loneliness about a big city that passes all understanding. The hustle and bustle of life only increases this feeling, and makes one long for the silent solitude of the open forest or the verdant fields.

And there is a hellish depression that creeps over the soul of the man

who has given his heart to the girl of his dreams, only to learn later that he has nothing to expect in return; for love is the all consuming fire that burns to ashes in the human breast but is never, never entirely destroyed. It lives on down through the ages and when the hand of the Reaper falls gently upon the brow of the mortal and soothes him to sleep for the last time, the ashes of love still live; for it is stronger than death!

Imagine the mental condition of Roger, afflicted as he was with the combination of both these tortures of the mind and soul and heart, as he sat in the little room of the cheap hotel that had been assigned to him, burdened with these two mortal afflictions.

Outside in the streets below, all was hurry and scurry. Loud mouthed news boys made the night air vibrate with their hawkings. Street cars and motors filled the surroundings with their noise and hum, all of which

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weighed heavily on the depressed mind of the lonely young man in the room above it.

But Roger Wilson was not one who would give away to the morbid loneliness and disappointment that had settled ever him. He was moulded from a different clay; and even though many troublesome dreams flitted through his vision and disturbed his sleep, he awoke early the following morning, shook the depression off him as the fleet-footed buck shakes the dew drops from his flanks, at the first faint glimmer of dawn, and proceeded at once to partake of a simple breakfast, before starting for the office of Colonel Frederick Brewster.

Upon arrival at the lawyer's office, he was met at the door by the old barrister himself. A quiet, dignified and kindly man he was, about sixty years of age. He possessed a shock of white hair and a set of long shaggy eyebrows, underneath which shone a pair of tender grey eyes. His pink

tinted, clean-shaven face, except for a drooping moustache, showed plainly the rugged health he enjoyed; and the slightly downward curve at the corners of his mouth indicated the seriousness of his manner.

Roger introduced himself and presented the note from John Henderson. The lawyer invited him to be seated and after carefully reading the words from his old friend, turned to the young man with a reminiscent smile playing over his features, as though the short and simple message had carried him back to pleasant memories of other days.

"So you are Roger Wilson and wish to take up the law?" he questioned.

"Yes, sir," replied Roger. "I have given much study to it already and I am very anxious to secure a connection where I may have the benefits that come with actual experience."

The old gentleman seemed to ignore the younger man's remarks as he continued:

"And I see you are a friend of John Henderson. John and I grew up together and used to court the same girl back home; but John finally won her. I believe his wife is dead now, is she not?"

This last remark carried with it a slight tone of sadness and was spoken in a voice tinged with meditation, that showed plainly on the fine features of the elder man.

"Yes, sir," the young man answered, "Mr. Henderson and I have always been great friends. We who know and love him best, call him Uncle John. He is one of the finest characters I ever knew, as was also his good wife, who has now been dead about ten years."

For several seconds the old lawyer sat in silent meditation, fingering the note Roger had given him. At last he recovered from his reverie and said:

"Well, my boy, I am in need of an assistant to take some of the burdens

off my shoulders, and while I cannot offer any great inducements in the way of salary, at the same time if you are capable of handling them, there are many minor matters that come before me, which I do not have the time to take care of, and it is possible that you might be able to pick up quite a lot of extra work in this way and so add to your income. Meanwhile it would be valuable experience for you."

Roger was so elated at learning that he was to be taken into the office of this grand old man, whom he had already learned to like immensely, until the matter of recompense was of secondary consideration.

"I will do the very best I can, Colonel Brewster and I thank you. I hope that my service will please you."

The matter of salary was fixed and the old lawyer bade him report for duty on the morrow. This gave him a chance to locate a rooming house, and the balance of the day was spent

in this task, for it is no easy matter to find a suitable location in the city of Atlanta, aside from her excellent hotels, owing to the ever increasing influx of people into that great metropolis. However, Roger managed to find what he wanted, after long hours of search.

Bright and early the following morning, the young man made his appearance at the lawyer's office and was assigned to his first legal work. He tackled it with a zest born of energy and determination and very soon felt himself perfectly at home. In the words of the kindly attorney "he fell right in it."

Colonel Brewster sensed the making of a great lawyer in the young man and, what with his pleasant manner and ever readiness to be useful, he quickly became attached to him.

The work was interesting to Roger, in that it was his chosen career; consequently the days wore on and the hours passed quickly, finding him

constantly busy with both duties and study.

But when night flung her mantle of darkness over the land and found him alone with his thoughts, in the little room to which he always repaired after the day's work was finished, it was then he found himself giving way to visions of those yesterdays; it was then the great battle that raged in his soul would reach its high point, and not even the books which were his dearest companions, could banish the troublesome shadows that flitted across his memory.

He had loved Dorothy Hamilton with all the tenderness of his being. He loved her now more than ever; and with the distracting thought and knowledge, that he would always love her thus—even unto death, it set his soul aflame with misery.

Why could he not forget this girl who had been so unjust to him?

Why could he not drive the thoughts of her entirely out of his memory?

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Why would he allow a vision of her to awaken him from peaceful slumber and cause him to pitch and tumble in hideous restlessness all through the long, weary nights?

Countless millions of others have asked the same questions from the beginning of time and have not yet found the answers.

But Roger Wilson was not one who finds solace in the hope of the morrow, through any little weakness of the will to give way. He was a fighting man and although his great love was consuming him, he would finish the battle without faltering or surrendering. His was not a nature to give up the fight when right stared him in the eyes. He would much prefer death itself.

The morning would dawn and find him once more losing himself in the busy routine of work and study; and thus the days and nights came and passed for many weeks, following his departure from the old surroundings.

UNCLE JOHN HENDERSON RECEIVES A MESSAGE.

A few months after Roger's departure, John Henderson received a letter from his old friend, Frederick Brewster. It read in part as follows:

And John, I want to say that it was a happy hour for me when you sent young Wilson to me. He is making good every day, and is beyond a doubt one of the most studious and finest young men I have ever known. He knows the law now almost as well as I do and I feel sure that in a short time he will develop into one of our brightest legal lights.

I note at times, though, a far-away expression on his face and have often wondered what is back of it, if anything; but withal, he is always on the job and is of great help to me.

I thought perhaps all this would interest you, since he seems very much devoted to you.

The old carrier was reading this message gleefully as he drove up to the Hamilton mail box. As usual, Dorothy was awaiting him, expect-

antly. This had been a habit with her lately and was explained by telling John Henderson a letter from a girl chum was being expected. And when these explanations were made, something deep down in the old man's heart, caused him to chuckle to himself. For he remembered that the carrier knew women—at least so he claimed.

The old man brought his horse to a stop, explaining:

"That letter you are looking for from your girl chum has not shown up yet, Miss Dorothy; but I have one here that I dare say is far more interesting."

Dorothy accepted the proffered missive and began slowly to read it; but as she progressed and began to grasp its meaning, she became more eager; and as the last line was finished, the old carrier who had been watching her closely, perceived the red flush that mounted her cheeks. The message had had its effect and perhaps

the memory of that other day, and all it had brought forth, accounted for the hurt expression on her face. The letter had cut her deeply, and John Henderson knew it, and was glad.

“Fine boy, that Roger,” he added, half teasingly, as he took the letter and drove off down the road, chuckling, leaving her standing by the mail box as though some unseen force had nailed her in her tracks.

The busy whir of life in the big city, together with Roger’s constantly increasing duties which Colonel Brewster had placed upon him, and which he welcomed, was having a rather wholesome effect upon the young man. It was only the lonely nights that found his thoughts wandering back to the old days and to the girl of his dreams. But he was fighting these memories persistently and with such determination that victory, he argued, must eventually be his.

But love is a mighty force that once wedged securely into our hearts, is

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capable of withstanding the terrific onslaughts of even the strongest determinations. It is the symbol of all the enchantment of Heaven in its gayer hours; but in the dark forebodings of doubtfulness and uncertainty, it has the power to cast us into the uttermost depth of hellish torment.

So let us not be too hasty in our judgment, should we later learn that Roger Wilson, with all his strength of character and grim determination, had fought a losing battle; for even the stoutest have succumbed to this compelling force of hell and Heaven combined, when the great call—the call of the soul—has been heard. For it is mightier than all!

It was now nearing the first of May and recalling the note held by Hammond & Co., whose office was just around the corner in the magnificent Candler building, Roger decided to attend to it.

Before leaving, however, he was

careful to check his bank book to ascertain the amount of his balance. He had lived frugally, and each month had been able to put aside a small amount of his earnings.

The balance showed that it would be impossible for him to take the note up in full; at the same time, he found that he would be in a position to make a good payment.

He proceeded at once to the office of the money lenders and had very little trouble inducing them to accept the partial payment, with a promise that the balance would be paid by the end of the year.

Having finished this task, Roger sat down and conveyed the information to his mother and step-father by letter.

Joe was at the little box to receive it, as letters were something of a curiosity with the Washburns, for the reason that one was seldom received; however, this fact did not deter Joe from meeting the rural carrier each

day, as was his custom, born of the peculiar curiosity of his race.

Reaching for the message that John Henderson handed him, the little negro's face was wreathed in smiles. He hurried to the house and placed it exultantly in Mrs. Washburn's hands, as though it were some lost treasure that he had unexpectedly unearthed.

With hands deep in the pockets of his faded overalls, he stood spellbound as the mother slowly read for the benefit of the other members of the family.

Its contents was the cause of much joy in the Washburn household, and as the last words of the message died away on her lips, Joe brought forth the old copper luck piece that he had been fumbling in his pocket all the while.

"Ol' injun," he exclaimed proudly, "you sho' ain't fool me yit; an' Ise gwiner rub all dem fedders off'n yo' ugly haid, er mek' you come w'en I calls you."

OTHER QUESTIONS LOOM UP.

Situated on the same floor with the Brewster offices, and just across the hall, was the handsome suite of Dr. James Blakeley. This Dr. Blakeley was a specialist and apparently enjoyed a large patronage, if one would judge from the many comings and goings to and from his offices.

Roger had to pass these offices each day, and for quite a while he had caught himself wondering just what sort of character this physician was; in fact, he had half concluded that the doctor's huge patronage was not all legitimate. He had judged this by reason of the fact that many of his visitors were handsome women, in the very bloom of health, to all outward appearances, and stylishly dressed.

For the past several days, the young man's suspicions had reached an acute stage, brought about by the actions of one of the doctor's visitors, a young girl about seventeen years of

age. This girl on two occasions had made visits to the physician after office hours; and Roger noticed that she appeared nervous and shy as she hurried into the suite, as though fearing to be seen by any one on the outside.

Young Wilson watched these movements several days in an effort to get a glimpse of the girl's face. At last one afternoon, as he was making his way to his own office, he spied the visitor hurrying down the hall toward Blakeley's suite. He timed his step to reach the entrance as she did. The girl had seen him and lowered her head in such a manner that her face was hidden under the wide-brimmed hat she wore; however, just as she was in the act of entering, that unexplainable mental telepathic force that causes a person to turn and look back at the sender of a silent call, was sufficient to cause the girl to look up quickly and squarely into the young man's face.

The glance, though hurried, showed a pair of large dark eyes, fringed with jet black lashes, and brows of the same color. The mouth was clear cut and well shaped, and would have been judged pretty, except for the thin, tightly drawn lips. The nose was decidedly Roman. It was the face of a Jewish girl beyond any doubt; at least so Roger decided as she quickly lowered it and entered.

There were several noted Hebrew physicians in the city and the fact that this girl was evidently a patron of a specialist, not of her nationality, lent further grounds for suspicion; for, as a rule Jewish people do not patronize the American in preference to their own race, except when circumstances make it necessary.

The incident disturbed him somewhat. Upon arrival back at his own office, he found Colonel Brewster reading the afternoon paper. But as the young man entered, he laid it aside, as though expectant of the

query that was about to be propounded.

"What sort of character is that Dr. Blakely, and what kind of reputation has he?" the young man asked.

"Well, my boy, I know very little of his character; as to his reputation, I can only say that it might be called rather doubtful. His patronage seems to consist mainly of women of means, judging from the stylishness of the clothes they wear, whom I have seen visit his offices.

"He has been indicted several times on charges of malpractice; but by some hook or crook, has never been convicted. The law has never been able to fasten its hold upon him, whether for lack of evidence or indifference, I am not in a position to say.

"It is likely a hard job to secure the proper evidence in a case of that kind, for such men as he, usually take care of that part of it."

Roger then recited to the old lawyer

what he had seen a short while before and confessed his suspicions of the doctor across the hall.

The lawyer concurred in what he had to say, but slowly shook his head as he continued:

“There are many crimes committed, my boy, which go unpunished. They are being committed every day, all about us; but due to so many legal technicalities and alarming indifference on the part of constituted authority, only a small percentage of these criminals are ever brought to justice; and while I agree that your suspicions concerning this Blakeley are no doubt well founded, at the same time we lawyers know that suspicion gets us nowhere before a judge and jury. It requires facts to convict; and since the medical profession, too, is full of technicalities in cases of certain kinds, it puts some of them entirely beyond the law, so to speak.”

Coming as it did from his trusted

friend and employer, this information was something new to Roger. He was such a thoroughly conscientious young man and such a staunch champion of right, that nothing seemed to him to be out of reach of the law. And although the words of the older man would ordinarily mean gospel to him, at the same time he found himself inclined to disagree with his friend and employer; but this inclination was kept secret.

Meanwhile, his thoughts suddenly reverted back to the night when his step-father was visited by those white-robed figures and the result which followed. He asked:

“What is this new organization—this Ku Klux Klan, and what is its object?”

Colonel Frederick Brewster had been one of the original few who had stood on the summit of Stone Mountain, under the flaming cross, at the birth of the Invisible Empire. But due to his age and preference for a

quiet life, free from any great amount of activity, he had never taken an active part in any of its deliberations. He was simply a charter member and his desire to be a Klansman was born of his knowledge of the noble virtues and traditions it represented. These alone had impelled him to lend his aid in the new organization.

“The Klan, my boy, so far as I know, is a secret organization to which only one hundred per cent. Americans are eligible to membership. And while only those who are willing to swear allegiance to our flag and our country, first and foremost—and only those born of American parentage, are acceptable to the organization, at the same time, its object is to uphold and help to enforce the laws in every manner possible; and also to defend the rights of all citizens, politically or otherwise, regardless of their birth or nationality. It is simply an organization with an ex-

clusive membership, just as the Jews, the Greeks and other foreign peoples have here in our country. Americans are excluded from membership in any of those; and since America is our country, we Americans feel that we are entitled to organize on just such a basis as they have. And as I stated, any one possessing the requirements mentioned, who bears a good reputation and is willing to take the reasonable and honorable oath required, is eligible to become a member.

"Now," he concluded, "I have told you all I know about it. I will only add that I believe it to be an organization composed of some of the grandest men in America, all of whom are striving to preserve the noble traditions which are rightfully ours, regardless of what the alien thinks of it."

"But why are American Catholics barred?" questioned Roger.

"Simply because they have sworn allegiance to the Pope of Rome, my

boy, and the oath of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan requires that allegiance be sworn to Almighty God and our country, first, last, and always; therefore a Catholic would first have to renounce his oath to the Pope and accept the other, before he would be eligible; and few of them care to do this. However, there are a number of cases on record right here in Atlanta, where erstwhile staunch Catholics have renounced their vows for the sake of those of the Klansmen."

"But what of the Mer Rouge murders?" asked Roger. "These have been charged to the Klan."

"Why certainly; you see there is a mighty opposition to the Invisible Empire, and its enemies will leave nothing undone to smother it out of existence. Time will, I am sure, convince us that the Klan had nothing to do with those murders.

"The evidence showed that the only connection, or seeming connection,

that could be reasonably placed on the Klan, was the fact that several unreliable witnesses testified that the kidnapers wore black hoods. As a matter of fact, every piece of Klan regalia is pure white, the symbol of truth and purity; furthermore, the fact that the bodies were horribly mutilated before being cast into Lake La Fourche, leads all right thinking men to believe the murders were committed by anti-Klansmen, and mutilated as they were, in order to make the accusation as well as the fact, appear as ghastly and repulsive as possible.

“Oh yes, my boy,” he continued, “the enemy will go to any ends to accomplish its purpose, which is, to destroy the organization; but time will reveal the fact that not only did the Klan have nothing to do with this crime, but on the other hand, it will most likely be the efforts of this organization that will finally bring to justice the guilty parties.

"The press of the country, at first taking a decided stand against the organization and condemning it in the most severe terms, has now quieted down to a neutral position, as the true facts come to light.

"The truth of the matter is, the dastardly attempt from the alien world to destroy the organization has failed miserably; on the other hand it is my candid opinion that through the efforts of the Klansmen, the two positions will be reversed and the shoe will be placed on the other foot, as it were."

Roger was silent for several seconds; the words of Colonel Brewster had sunk deeply into the young man's heart, and he found himself between two fires as it were—criss-crossed on a question that had weighed heavily on him since the night of the visit to his step-father, and which had assumed more serious proportions since recalling the remarks of the old law-

yer, in reference to the Ku Klux Klan and all that it stood for.

The incident of the girl entering Blakeley's office and the words of Colonel Brewster, "certain cases and crimes are entirely beyond the law," were flitting through his mind, when suddenly his reverie was broken by the shouts and cheers of people in the street below.

Roger hurried to the large window that opened onto the street, in front of the office. Great throngs of people were pushing and crowding on the sidewalks and in the edges of the street itself. In the center of this mass of humanity, was a long stream of white-robed, white-hooded figures, headed by Old Glory, fluttering and flapping her star bedecked silken folds, in the gentle breeze.

The sight was an inspiring one for him, as those figures in white wending their seemingly endless way between the cheering crowds on either side. The spectacle held him spell-

bound and a thousand thoughts flashed across his brain as he gazed upon it.

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan were on parade, ten thousand strong, and in full regalia, in spite of the hundreds of protest, and many threats from the alien world!

THE QUESTIONS ARE ANSWERED.

A few mornings after the notable Klan parade, Roger was hurriedly scanning the early paper, preparatory to settling down to his day's work. He was about to lay the paper aside when his eye fell upon the following item of news:

*YOUNG WOMAN DIES**AT LAKE VIEW HOSPITAL*

A young woman, apparently about eighteen years of age, was picked up on Spring street late yesterday afternoon in an unconscious condition. She was rushed to Lake View Hospital, but died a few moments later without regaining consciousness. She has been identified as being Miss Rosa Elverstein and was employed by an uptown department store. It is learned that her home is in Ridgeville where the remains will be shipped tomorrow for burial.

An interesting feature of the case, is that a post-mortem examination revealed the fact that her death was due to peritonitis brought about by what appeared to have been an illegal operation.

Roger analyzed each word and phrase of this interesting bit of news; and as he slowly perused the printed lines, the face of the young Jewish girl rose up before him.

Could this be the same young woman he had seen entering the doctor's office only a few days before?

Could it be that this corpse, now lying at the hospital, and the girl he had seen enter Blakeley's office, were one and the same?

It was possible. He would see!

Hurrying to the street, the young man hailed a passing taxi and directed that he be taken to the hospital.

His brain was in a whirl as the car wormed its way through the heavy traffic, causing him to pitch and lurch from side to side, as the driver picked his way carefully through the crowded thoroughfare.

Finally the throngs were left and they came to a stop before the handsome grounds and buildings of Lake View Hospital.

Instructing the driver to wait for him, he hurried up the wide walkway to the door of the main building. He was met by an attendant who graciously complied with his request to see the body of Rosa Elverstein; and, as the white coverlet that hid her lifeless form was tenderly drawn back from her face, he gazed upon the features of the same young girl whom he had seen enter Blakeley's suite; and for a moment, his heart fluttered excitedly as he recalled the whole unhappy incident.

There is a mysterious reverence the living have for the dead. It melts our spirits as the rain drops melt the snow; and for a short fraction of time, Roger Wilson stood in silent meditation—enthralled.

In that brief period that he gazed upon the form of the dead girl, his memory went back to the day he had seen her enter Blakeley's office. He pictured her in the full bloom of youth and life, and as this mental

picture was slowly being painted across his vision, his thoughts suddenly turned to the memory of another girlish face that to him, was far sweeter than the one he was now looking upon; and as his imagination pictured the beautiful face and form of Dorothy Hamilton, lying in the cold embrace of death, instead of the one before him, he lost himself entirely for a moment, and all the furies of damnation seemed to lay hold of him, arousing every ounce of fighting blood in his heart.

He thanked the attendant as he left the silent hall of death; but on his face was written a terrible expression, that boded ill to some one; and the half frown and set jaw was evidence that a great determination had seized him, as he returned to his office to think over the tragedy.

Colonel Brewster had just finished reading the news of the young Jewish girl's death, as Roger arrived. It was immediately made the subject of

discussion, and the young man covered each detail, from the time he had seen Rosa Elverstein enter Blakeley's office, which had served to arouse his suspicions, right down to his visit to the hospital, which had confirmed all his beliefs.

Colonel Brewster paid close attention as Roger recited his experiences. The old lawyer was deeply touched at the young man's words, as he suggested taking the matter up with the authorities. But he slowly shook his head, as he quietly replied:

"My boy, you no doubt feel as I do about such things, but I fear it would be a waste of time to take the matter up with the Solicitor. In the first place, the whole case would have to be built upon circumstantial evidence; and while I agree with you that Blakeley's hand is in this deal perhaps, at the same time, all the secrets connected with it are his, for according to the paper, the girl died without making a statement."

"But the evidence is strong, Colonel Brewster; it can be built up easily in my opinion," argued Roger.

"Possibly so, my boy; possibly so," agreed the old lawyer, "but the burden would be on the State to prove every allegation that might be brought, and among others, would be the purpose of the girl entering the doctor's office, and the subsequent happenings behind closed doors; and since no one but the physician himself knows what took place from time to time on those visits by her, it would be almost impossible to convict him under present day laws. It seems to be another of those cases entirely beyond the law, which we recently discussed."

Roger listened attentively but somewhat disappointedly to the words of the elder man. He had a fatherly reverence and respect for his friend and benefactor, and the very highest regard for his opinion in all matters; but he was so thoroughly

aroused over the tragedy until he was inclined to insist, and beg of the old lawyer that he be allowed to take the case up with the Solicitor on his own account.

Colonel Brewster had long since realized the great ability and enthusiasm possessed by the young man, and after hearing his plea to be allowed to act alone in the matter, he half-heartedly gave his consent, at the same time concluding the discussion with the words he had recently spoken :

"You may do as you think best, my boy, but I am inclined to believe that your efforts will be in vain. It's a case entirely beyond the law."

The unpleasant incidents were half forgotten as Roger settled down to his work for the balance of the day. Nothing of importance in connection with it occurred for several days, during which time the young man worked at odd moments preparing data to be presented to the Solicitor.

A few nights after the deplorable death of Rosa Elverstein, he had occasion to return to the law offices for some memorandums he had intended taking with him at the close of the day's work, and which he had forgotten.

Recollection of all that had happened recently, caused the young man to glance toward the doctor's office as he passed, on his way to his own.

The building was now deserted; the busy occupants of the day having long since left off their toil and departed.

His eye was attracted toward what appeared to be a piece of white cardboard projecting from the crack in the jamb of the door. He was not over curious, but was a careful observer; and it was perhaps both these forces of nature that impelled him to halt and examine the strange looking thing before him.

The outside, exposed part of the card, was blank; but as the young man turned it over, his eye caught the

following, printed carefully and plainly by a hand that showed marked ability and education in every twist and curve of the letters:

YOU HAVE FORTY-EIGHT HOURS
TO GET OUT OF THE STATE, AND
FAILURE TO HEED THIS WARN-
ING WILL SUBJECT YOU TO CON-
SEQUENCES THAT WILL NOT BE
AT ALL PLEASANT. TAKE HEED!

Vigilance Committee.

So another force was aware of the evil-doings of Blakeley, thought Roger, as he slowly studied the message and grasped the full significance of its meaning.

Once again his thoughts flew back to that other night, back home, when his step-father had been made to see his short-comings.

And, as he recalled that long line of white-robed, white-hooded men, who

had recently paraded; and his recollection of the words of Colonel Brewster, "beyond the law," which were now ringing in his ears, a great light—the light of complete understanding, burst upon him, and all the vexing questions, concerning the Invisible Empire, which had tormented him for months, had suddenly seemed to be answered!

ROGER GETS AN IMPORTANT
CASE

Conscience makes cowards of us all, therefore, when Dr. Blakeley arrived at his suite the following morning, and found the warning note, unmistakable fear was written on every line of his face. It had a sinister meaning to him and his voice trembled as he called police headquarters and requested that a detective be sent.

Larry O'Connor and Jim Doyle were quickly dispatched to his office. They found the doctor pacing up and down the floor, in a very nervous state; but he soon became calm, as the two detectives assured him that he had nothing to fear.

"This is only a trifling matter that should not worry you, Dr. Blakeley," assured Doyle. "The law will give you every protection and I am quite certain that we will have this case in hand and the guilty party, or parties,

behind the bars before the week is out."

"So you advise that I ignore this thing altogether?" inquired Blakeley.

"Yes," answered the detective; "meanwhile, if you desire, we will keep a close watch on your home for a few nights to see that you are not molested."

"By all means do this for me," nervously implored the doctor.

"It is getting to be a bad state of affairs," he continued, "when an American citizen is subjected to such threats as this; it's worse than bolshevik Russia."

"It certainly is," agreed Doyle; "but do not allow it to interfere with your business in any way. The department will go the limit in this little deal, and we will exhaust every effort toward rounding up the perpetrators of this piece of work." And with these comforting words they departed.

This assurance on the part of the

plain clothes men was indeed consoling to Blakeley. The strong arm of the law, forgetful of that other crime, had been placed around him in a protecting manner, and its warmth helped to dispel the chill of fear that had enveloped him.

Meanwhile Roger Wilson bided his time and became a silent spectator to the drama that was about to be enacted, and he counted the hours that dragged by, patiently awaiting the climax.

Tonight, he figured, would mark the end of the time limit set by the makers of the threatening card; and he had reason to believe the unknown authors would be as good as their word.

As he pitched and tossed nervously, on a sleepless bed, his mind wandered back to the corpse of the little Jewish maiden, whose life he felt sure had been ruthlessly destroyed. His vision returned to the night when Hiram Washburn was visited by those ghost-

like figures; and his memory recalled the words of Colonel Brewster—"beyond the law, my boy,—beyond the law."

These words of the old lawyer were now hammering themselves into his weary brain; and when sleep did finally envelop him, it was only to be broken by dreams of a long line of white-robed ghost-like figures, marching column upon column, in a never ending line; and in the center of this mass of white-robed humanity, he seemed to see the form of Dr. Blakeley, trembling and struggling with mortal fear, in the rear of whom marched the State Solicitor while the rythm of the marchers' feet seemed to beat out: Beyond the law! Beyond the law! Beyond the law!

A watcher at the bedside of the tormented young sleeper, would have noticed the faint flicker of a smile, overspread his countenance—a smile that reflected the thoughts within, and said as plainly as words:

"There is nothing beyond the law of God or man!"

Morning broke cool and balmy and found Roger up, eager to learn what the night had produced. Suspense had slightly unnerved him as he hurriedly made his way down town quest of an early paper. His efforts were rewarded by the yells of a newsboy making his way across the Whitehall street viaduct:

"Extra! Extra! Extra!" rang out the shrill voice of the newsie, on the cool morning air.

"All 'bout kidnap'n las' night; all 'bout kidnap'n!"

Roger beckoned to him in eager anticipation of what he was about to read; and as the little fellow passed him one of the papers, his eye caught the following, spread across the top, in huge type:

MASKED MOB KIDNAPS AND SEVERELY THRASHES WELL KNOWN PHYSICIAN—BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN MEMBERS OF THE NOTORIOUS KU KLUX KLAN.

Dr. James Blakeley, one of the best known specialists in the city, was visited last night by a hooded mob of masked men, who forced him into an automobile and escorted him several miles out into the country where he was severely flogged and warned to leave the state immediately.

It will be remembered that Dr. Blakeley received a warning a few days ago to leave the state. He at once took the matter up with the police department and detectives O'Connor and Doyle, plain-clothes men, were assigned to the case. The detectives have kept a close watch on the physician's residence since that time. However, as the doctor drove up to his home last night, another car filled with white-robed men dashed up and seized him before the two detectives could interfere.

O'Connor and Doyle put up a brave fight with the abductors, but were overpowered. In the scuffle that ensued, Detective Doyle managed to tear the robe and mask from one of the men and immediately recognized the face and features of Robert Downey, well known young man of this city. With this information, the Downey home was watched and he was later placed under arrest as he was about to enter it.

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Due to the seriousness of the crime for which Downey was arrested, he was placed in jail without bond. He steadfastly refuses to disclose the names of the other men who participated in the kidnaping of Dr. Blakeley, but it is thought they are all members of the Ku Klux Klan, and this will be fully investigated.

Readers will recall that Dr. Blakeley was indicted several months ago by the grand jury on a charge of malpractice; but due to insufficient evidence, he was exonerated at the trial that followed.

This latest outrage is a deplorable one and should have the undivided attention of the authorities.

There were several other outrages, thought Roger, that should have had the law's attention, as he hurried to his office to think the matter over. Arriving there, he was just in the act of settling down to the duties that surrounded him when the telephone rang. It was the warden requesting that Colonel Brewster come to the jail for a conference with Robert Downey, who wished the lawyer to represent him.

Colonel Brewster had not yet ar-

rived at the office, but came in very shortly. His fine old face was wreathed in a pleasant smile as he entered. He, too, had just read of the kidnaping and no doubt he was pondering over it as he began:

"Looks as if you have been thwarted in the Blakeley matter, my boy. It appears there are others taking the same view of the case as you do; and judging from what I saw while passing his suite just now it is my belief that Blakeley must have suddenly decided to take a vacation. One of his attendants is busily packing his instruments, and I am of the opinion that the doctor is about to leave us."

"No doubt he is, Colonel Brewster; and I think I would do the same were I in his position."

"By the way," he recalled, "the warden called up with a request from Downey that you come to see him at once. He wishes you to represent him."

"Well," thoughtfully and slowly re-

plied the old lawyer, "I figured he would. He is an excellent young man and I have known his family for many years; all fine people, to be sure. However, I am certain you are a great deal more familiar with this matter than I am, and perhaps more enthusiastic; therefore I think I shall turn the same over to you, as your first big case.

"I shall, of course, assist you as much as possible," the elder lawyer assured, "but I have found that enthusiasm plays a big part in a close case—and I feel sure this is going to be a close one, therefore you may take it in charge."

Exultation and eagerness was written plainly on the young lawyer's face, as he replied:

"And you are going to trust me with this matter, Colonel?"

"I certainly am, my boy—that is, if young Robert Downey is agreeable and I think he will be on my recommendation."

"I am quite sure of it," he ventured, "at any rate we shall soon see."

Roger was elated over the prospect of taking charge of such an important case. As he hurriedly made his way to the prison that housed Robert Downey, his thoughts reverted back to those other days, which had been so full of sadness for him; and he found himself wondering what Dorothy was doing and whether or not she had "found company", as John Henderson had spoken of. He told himself that, perhaps, after all, he had been hasty; but recalling her abruptness and unfairness to him, he justified the position he had taken toward the girl he had left behind, and the old determination to win, laid hold of his proud heart and thrust him on and on.

He was a man, he argued; and this strip of a girl had played unfair to him; and if ever there should be a reconciliation between them, she would be the one to take the initiative.

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Suddenly, realizing the importance of his mission, the young attorney squared his shoulders as if shaking off the reverie that had held him, and hurried briskly to the prison.

Introducing himself to the warden, he was shown to the cell of Robert Downey. He found him to be a young man of about his own age, clean cut and handsome, every line and feature of his face indicating good breeding and much strength of character.

Downey read the note from Colonel Brewster, sized the young lawyer up quickly, and they were soon acquainted.

"I understand, from Col. Brewster, you seem to be much interested and enthused in my case," began Downey. "It looks as if I might be up against a hard proposition."

"Indeed I am enthused," returned Roger, "and I assure you that it will be my sole aim and purpose to clear you of the charge against you, if pos-

sible. There is no doubt a principle to be defended, as well as a character."

"Are you a Klansman?" whispered Robert Downey, cautiously.

"No; I am sorry to say I am not," was the reply. "I only wish I were, but I assure you that I am in deep sympathy with their cause, regardless of whether I am a member or not. I have had occasion to see some of the work of the organization, and I am frank to say that in the beginning, I had some doubt as to the sincerity of the aims of the Invisible Empire; however, all that has been dispelled in the light of recent facts I am aware of."

Roger did not explain the main reason why he had not applied for membership in the Klan; he did not deem it advisable. However, since the incident of the kidnaping, which had been the last doubtful link in his mind, as to the sincere and noble purposes of this new organization, he

had secretly made up his mind to qualify himself for membership in the order, regardless of the other ties that bound him. For Roger Wilson was extremely conscientious and capable of discerning the good from the bad in life, and, although the troublesome and tormenting questions that had besieged him for many months, had been long in the answering, at the same time the light of understanding had finally come to him and he would follow its shining rays to the end of the trail!

The young lawyer spent several hours with his client, gaining all the information possible concerning the case; and when the time came for him to depart, Robert Downey's whole demeanor indicated the complete satisfaction and confidence he had placed in him. It was simply a matter in which the lawyer felt as keen an interest as did the client; and when such a combination is found, it is,

in itself, half a victory before the battle.

But Roger was student enough to realize, that before him lay a great and important undertaking, and a mighty task, for the State would make out an almost perfect case and his chances of winning were indeed slim. Colonel Brewster himself had confessed this much.

A CHANGE OF HEART

As the young lawyer was about to take leave of his client, they were interrupted by the approach of a news reporter and a staff photographer, who had been admitted to interview Robert Downey and make a picture.

Seeing Roger about to take his leave, the reporter hurriedly interrupted him with, "I am Mr. Mason, of the Evening Star. Are you interested in the Downey case?"

"I expect to represent Mr. Downey, with the aid of Colonel Frederick Brewster," Roger replied. "I am Rog-

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er Wilson, assistant to Colonel Brewster."

The reporter looked the young man over approvingly. Every one in Atlanta knew Colonel Brewster, and at the mention of his name, the newspaper man immediately became interested.

"Then do not hurry, Mr. Wilson," he urged. "I would be glad to have you pose for a picture, along with young Downey, if you have no objections."

This sudden proposal of the reporter meant a great deal to the young attorney. It made him feel several inches taller and years older; it impressed and encouraged him wonderfully. It was a new experience indeed to the young man from the country and a very pleasant one at that. But notwithstanding all this, Roger accepted the proposal calmly and non-chantly, as though such things were ordinary every-day occurrences with him. Whatever emotions that may

have been tingling his nerves were held in check so far as the reporter was concerned.

Having placed lawyer and client in the desired poses, the flash pan was produced and in a few seconds it was all over. His picture—Roger Wilson's picture—would appear on the front page of the Evening Star! What would the folks back home say when they saw it? What would Uncle John Henderson think? And—and, what would Dorothy say if she saw it?

These thoughts chased through Roger's brain and during the trip back to his office, the details of the Downey case for the time being, were forgotten.

He had tried hard to put Dorothy Hamilton out of his mind and heart; he had fought every memory of the girl who had been so unjust to him; and now in spite of all the important issues that were at stake; in spite of all the earnest thought and hard work that was before him, he found

himself entirely oblivious to his present duties and once again his memory, like a pensive Ruth, went glean- ing the silent fields of childhood and carried him back to those other days when he and Dorothy were children, running and playing in the open fields and forests, avowed sweethearts never to part from each other. These memories burnt into his very soul and over his heart and mind there came a great longing—a longing to be with her once more; to explain to her and beg her forgiveness—a longing and yearning to clasp her in his arms, close to his heart, and whisper into her lovely ear the sweetest story ever told.

But no! This would never be! Never, never, never!

His pride had been sorely wounded, and the years alone could quench the fires that raged within him. Death would be far more welcome to him than an admissiion of defeat through weakness on his part!

Roger cast these thoughts out of his mind and finally reached the office and began at once the preparation of his case. Court day was not far off and time was precious. Every ounce of energy, and every moment of his existence must be devoted to this great undertaking, which to him now seemed only a pleasant duty. His heart was full of sympathy for the cause that he expected to fight for, and determination urged him to his utmost.

The Evening Star featured the Downey case. It carried Roger's picture together with a very complimentary news item regarding the young lawyer. It was more or less exaggerated, as is the case with most reporters; however, it pleased the young attorney nevertheless.

Roger purchased two extra copies of the paper, one for his mother and the other for Uncle John Henderson. He dispatched these to their destinations and tried to imagine what the

effect would be on the receivers when they saw them, as he settled down to his task.

Joe was waiting at the Washburn box when the old carrier arrived and handed him the paper. He was on hand when it was opened and read by Mrs. Washburn, and when that good lady showed him the picture, the little negro went into ecstasies.

"Ol' Injun, you sho' is comin' when I calls you," he ejaculated. "I knowed you warn't neber gwiner fool me."

But if the receipt of the paper had caused jubilation in the Washburn household, it was also the means of bringing much joy to John Henderson, as he jogged along his route, perusing every line closely, and chuckling happily as he did so.

Dorothy Hamilton was waiting at the mail box, as usual, when the old carrier drove up.

"No letter yet, Miss Dorothy," he began; "but I have some mighty interesting news from him," slyly,

which insinuation caused the red blood to flow to the young lady's cheeks as she answered:

"I am not expecting a letter from Mr. Wilson at all, Mr. Henderson. I think I have told you this before," angrily.

"Well, I know, Miss Dorothy; but you see the unexpected is nearly always what happens, and I have known some people who are always expecting the unexpected," returned the old man knowingly.

"However," he continued, "I see where our friend Roger Wilson is getting his name and picture in the papers, and folks must be getting important when such like happens."

Without waiting for a reply from the girl, John Henderson passed the paper to her carelessly, and, as her slightly trembling hand reached out, almost mechanically, and received it, he drove off down the road, shaking with laughter.

John Henderson was a wise old

man in such matters; and the wistful look on Dorothy's face plainly told him, day by day, that her heart was still where it had been and would eventually work out the final climax to her deep rooted emotions.

She was much absorbed in the item concerning Roger—so much so that she came near stumbling over her brother, Dick, who was sitting on the porch, watching her.

"Must be something important, Sis," he ventured. "Is the president dead or has Bryan announced for Congress? Come! Speak up! Which is it?"

"It is neither, Dick. But I have just noticed where Roger Wilson has become quite a lawyer in Atlanta. In fact they have his picture in the Star, along with a big write-up. Guess he will soon be forgetting us altogether—that is, if he has not already done so," wistfully.

"I suspect he has already forgotten you, Sis, if that is what is troubling.

"By the way," he continued, "forgot to tell you. I was talking with old man Washburn the other day. He is very nice now, you know—seems to have forgotten all about the unhappy incident when the boys raked him over the coals. Mentioned Roger's name, too; said he should have explained that night that he was not connected with the moonshine business in any manner; that Roger had opposed his step from the very first; that he and Roger were quarreling about that the morning you rode by searching for old Muley. Meant to tell you this before, Sis, but forgot it.

"So he is making good, eh?" he questioned. "Well, I am glad to hear it. Always liked that fellow very much, somehow or other."

Dorothy drank in every word her brother spoke; and, as he concluded there came into her eyes a far-off look, and into her face a half doubtful, half sorrowful expression, as

though she were reviewing in these few seconds, the past months of loneliness, which for her had held no happiness. Then this expression was changed to one of anger, as the red spots in her cheeks indicated. She seemed suddenly to reach out and find something, for which she had long been searching.

"And you have known this without telling me?" Dorothy flung at Dick, heatedly. "Well," she continued, "you owe Roger Wilson an apology, which you should make even though you were compelled to crawl to him to pay it."

"Well, what the—" But Dick did not finish for his sister had turned angrily away and hurried into the house.

So after all, she had been too hasty; she had been mistaken about Roger Wilson. And Dick was to blame! How could she make amends? What must she do?

These questions were troubling her sorely. She would write him a letter, explaining and apologizing. And if she did so, would he forgive her?

This last question worried her more than any. It just occurred to her that perhaps it might be too late for such things. At any rate she would try it. So, with pen and paper, she began:

“My Dear Mr. Wilson:”

This did not please her. It was too cold and formal. She tore it to bits and, after resting her chin in her hand a few seconds, proceeded again:

“Dear Roger:”

Her hand faltered. She bit her lip and hesitated. This was not suitable either. It only conveyed thoughts of an ordinary friendship, and this was not sufficient. She tore the sheet of paper up and flung it into the big fire place. Then again:

“My Own Dear Boy”:

Pride had dictated the first and second attempt; her heart was dic-

tating the third; and, suddenly realizing what she was about to do, Dorothy would not surrender, but like one who has been surprised unexpectedly--like a child caught in some forbidden act, she snatched the piece of paper up and crumpled it tightly in her hand, as though she were afraid some one had seen what she had written. Then she lost control of herself and the bitter pangs of remorse and pride, shook her unmercifully and tore at her very heart strings, as she fell across the nearby sofa, while the pent up tears made tiny rivulets down her cheeks.

For hours she lay in this position. The tears soon dried and left on her face a tense, almost painful expression. A great battle was now raging in her soul and a victory was soon to be won.

Suddenly the lines in her face softened, as though a pleasant relief had come to her. Into her eyes there came a light, born of a new understanding. The cord that had so

tightly bound her heart and conscience for these many months, had at last been broken, and into her life there came a great awakening.

Her mind was made up; the battle was over; the victory had been won!

A TRIPLE VICTORY!

Court day was at hand. The long heralded case of the State vs. Robert Downey, charged with kidnaping and flogging Dr. James Blakely, for his alleged mistreatment of a young Jewish girl, had been set for hearing.

Interest was at fever heat. The court room was crowded to its capacity. Not since the Leo Frank case had there been such throngs of people to witness a trial.

Young Robert Downey was said to be a member of the Ku Klux Klan—that newly organized force known as the Invisible Empire, and at whose doors had been laid many a crime, and charges of numerous misdeeds.

Rumor had it that only white American citizens, of American parentage, were eligible to membership in its ranks; also that its motto was “protection to Americans only.” But this theory had been exploded entirely insofar as the motto of the organiza-

tion was concerned, for Rosa Elverstein was Jewish; and the presumption was, that the crime committed against her by an American doctor, was the direct cause of the kidnaping in which Robert Downey was alleged to have taken a part.

These rumors and theories furnished a big drawing card. The curious were there, they wanted to see what a Klansman looked like, if possible. The sympathetic were on hand, for sentiment was about evenly divided; in fact, it was a motley crowd.

Roger had worked hard on this case. In the first place, those great, troublesome questions that had haunted him day and night at first—questions of the right and wrong of the assumed authority of this newly born invisible force of human beings, whose uniforms were long white robes, with hoods and masks, had at last been answered satisfactorily.

And the incident of the mistreatment of the young Jewish girl, by

Blakeley, had been the final decisive factor in satisfying him of the lofty aims and noble purposes of its members; it had convinced him that the Ku Klux Klan was an impartial organization where law and order, or right and wrong, were concerned; and that it was only in cases where the law failed to act that its force was likely to be felt.

Therefore, it is little wonder that we find the heartfelt sympathy of Roger Wilson going out to the Klansmen, and particularly the member who was now on trial, charged with a serious crime. He was ready to make the battle of his life in defense of this clean, conscientious young American; he was willing to risk his whole future, professionally speaking just as the prisoner at the bar had gladly risked his honorable reputation and freedom, in a cause that he knew to be just and right.

The same law that now held Robert Downey in its clutches, had allow-

ed a brother American to go unpunished, and for a crime that was ten thousand fold more heinous!

This was the spring of thought from which young Wilson drew deep draughts of inspiration; it was such thoughts as these and the unmistakable knowledge he had of the whole sad affair, that inspired him to set his jaw and square his shoulders, in grim determination, to fight as he had never fought before, in a cause that, to him, he now felt was glorious.

The Mer Rouge murders were fresh in the minds of the spectators. These crimes had been laid at the door of the Klan; but all the forces of the commonwealth of Louisiana, as well as the Federal authorities, legally speaking, had sifted the evidence with an undisputable fineness, and had failed to fasten even the semblance of any blame on the Invisible Empire.

The Ku Klux Klan had been exonerated of this charge, and the organization now stood ready to lend its aid

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toward hunting down the guilty perpetrators of that unthinkable crime.

But with all this knowledge that had so recently been brought to light, there were anti-Klansmen in the court room, who were still ready to believe the organization was made up of cut-throats and vagabonds!

The dignified old judge finally rapped for order. The clerk called the case of the State of Georgia vs. Robert Downey. The solicitor announced ready, as did also the defense. A hush fell over the big court room, indicating the keen interest that was being manifested in the case.

Colonel Brewster sat at the table with Roger and Downey, ready to lend his advice from time to time. The striking of the jury was left to him entirely, for the young lawyer was not familiar with such matters; and since the evidence was strong against his client, it was necessary to pick such a jury as would allow the heart as much as the head to dictate the ver-

dict. And the old lawyer was known to be an expert in selecting juries. He went about his task, slowly and carefully, studying each name on the panel before him. Finally, the twelve men were selected and, after being asked the usual questions and taking the customary oath, they were seated.

The state's star witness, Dr. James Blakeley, was not on hand for the trial. That gentleman had long since departed for other climes and his whereabouts was a mystery. He was evidently satisfied to get off with a whole skin. As to the outcome of the Downey case, it was plain to be seen that the doctor was little interested.

The first witness for the state was Larry O'Connor. He was placed upon the stand by the Solicitor, and question after question fired at him. He was cool and collected and answered each query readily and frankly.

He told of the night of the kidnapping; of the automobile loaded with

the white robed figures; of the scuffle that followed as they attempted to take the physician by force; of the stripping away of the robe and mask of one of the members of the hooded band. In fact, the evidence he gave, was very damaging to young Downey, and it was strengthened when the Solicitor asked this final question, pointing toward Robert:

“Mr. O’Conor, is that defendant sitting there the person from whom you tore the mask?”

“Yes”, answered the witness.

“We rest,” announced the Solicitor, abruptly.

Colonel Brewster was absorbing every question and answer. He realized, as did numbers of other old time lawyers, that the tide was against his client. The State had set up a strong case, as the evidence showed; and it would require some careful strategy to break down the testimony.

The old lawyer took Roger by the arm and pulled him down close. He

whispered something in the young man's ear, to which Roger nodded assent, as he rose to take the witness.

"Mr. O'Connor, you have stated to the court, on oath, that the defendant, Robert Downey, was a party to this alleged kidnaping, by reason of the fact that you stripped the mask from his face; that he was in the car that rushed Blakeley away from the scene. I will now ask you, whether or not, you will swear that this defendant accompanied the other alleged kidnapers, to the scene of the punishment?"

This was unlooked for; the witness squirmed and twisted, and at last replied, haltingly:

"I cannot say positively."

"Then you may be excused," concluded Roger.

A shuffling of feet among the spectators as well as the jury alike, plainly indicated that this was a master stroke. The defense had scored a telling point. After all it began to

look like a clear case of circumstantial evidence, but still slightly in favor of the State.

Colonel Brewster smiled admiringly at his assistant as he shot home the vital question, and noted the impression it had created.

Doyle was the next and last witness to take the stand. He corroborated practically all that had been said by O'Connor. The Solicitor handled him a bit more carefully and made a great effort to offset the damage that had been caused by Roger's timely question to O'Connor, but to no avail. It had sunk deeply.

Upon conclusion of the State with the last witness, Roger repeated the same query to him, as had been put to O'Connor, and received the same reply.

It was plain the Solicitor realized the effect of the question and answers by the two witnesses, and he made every effort to discount its significance in his argument to the jury.

Roger had only asked the one and rested.

The Solicitor assumed the manner of one who is entirely confident of victory. He even treated the defense lightly, by assuring young Downey that he was very sorry for him, but that the hand of the law was upon him, and he must suffer for his illegal acts. His speech was brief and his tone moderate. Confidence of conviction was written in every line of his face and his air was one of almost indifference as he concluded by informing the jury that it was their solemn duty to find the defendant guilty.

Roger had realized all along that victory would depend mainly on the impression that could be made on the jury. He knew the evidence was strong against Downey and had prepared accordingly. He believed he had at least one advantage over the Solicitor. He assumed that the old experienced lawyer would treat him

as a joke on account of his extreme youth and inexperience. And this assumption had been correct; it stood out in every gesture and every word, during his speech to the court. And the younger lawyer knew that if he could surprise the jury and spectators with oratory and ability, the tide could perhaps be turned and the case would be won.

He intended to take the court by storm if possible; and since his whole heart and soul were in this case, it lent him inspiration and enthusiasm.

Once during the trial, while these thoughts were occupying his mind, he had half wished that Dorothy were there to hear his appeal; he longed to prove to her his own innocence, in some word or phrase, that he could inject into his plea to the jury; some little reference, perhaps, that she would easily grasp the significance of; in fact, once during the preparation of his case and his speech, he had, in a moment of weakness, half

made up his mind that he would go to her when it was all over and beg her forgiveness; for he was a man now, and all the little imaginary wounds of the past had almost healed in the long months of his loneliness and troubles. But he fought this temptation and dismissed it.

He was a bit nervous as he took the floor for the closing argument; however, he soon gained control of his emotions and settled down to the task before him.

At times his oratory was so appealing and his pleas so urging, until the silence about him could almost be felt, so rapt was the attention being paid him.

Old lawyers, long in the practice, riveted their attention on each word and phrase that fell from his lips; and admiration of his surprising ability was plainly written on each countenance.

He reminded the court of the many crimes that are committed and pun-

ishment never meted out to the perpetrators. He impressed his hearers with a recital of the laxity of the present day laws and constituted authority. He carried them back to the unhappy night when his own step-father had been visited by the hooded band, after the law had failed to act in that case. He mentioned to them his own doubts and misgivings, as to the seeming authority those hooded men had clothed themselves with, and whether this new force would be a menace or a benefaction to the people of the State and Nation. He told them of the good results of that visit to his step-father, and all it had cost him personally. He pointed out to them the many unlawful acts that had been avenged by the Invisible Empire, and gradually he brought them down to the recent heinous crime against Rosa Elverstein, now sleeping in an untimely grave. He pictured Blakeley, guilty as hell, having been indicted a number of times and each

time the law failing to convict him because of technicalities.

He swung into his argument gradually and easily, and no trace of the former nervousness was apparent. His voice was low and soft, yet plainly audible, at times rising to a high pitch as he begged earnestly for real justice, from the very depths of his soul.

There is a wonderful power in oratory ; there is something mysteriously resistless about an able orator, who is wrapped up in his subject, and who is capable of compelling beautiful language to flow from his lips.

Roger Wilson held his hearers spell-bound for more than an hour. Not a sound save that of his pleading young voice was to be heard in the big court room. Great lawyers, and even the dignified old judge, looked and listened with rapt attention and admiration and more than one face was stained with tears, as the young man concluded with:

“And now, your Honor, and gentlemen of the jury, we are going to leave the fate of Robert Downey in your hands. You have heard the evidence; you are aware of the charges; you know the impulse that led him—the impulse that should lead us all—justice toward the innocent dead who are helpless to plead their own cause. And while the State has failed to prove that this defendant is guilty of the act for which he stands charged, at the same time, the evidence, we will admit, is slightly against him. But out of the greatness and goodness of your hearts for the cause of right and justice, I do not believe your consciences will allow you to convict this young man, on only the circumstantial evidence that has been presented. And should you bring in a verdict of guilty, remember—you will have removed temporarily, from society, one of its greatest champions and benefactors!”

A thousand eyes gazed on Roger

Wilson as he took his seat beside his client and Colonel Brewster. The old lawyer reached over and grasped the young man's hand in admiration. The judge delivered an able charge to the jury and they filed out slowly, to deliberate on the case; meanwhile the court officers and spectators were taking this advantage to recuperate from the past tension.

Feet were shuffling and other physical motions were being gone through with, as the clerk and solicitor outlined the next case on the docket.

An interval of some fifteen minutes had elapsed when a rap was heard on the jury room door. A court attache was dispatched to ascertain the cause. He reported that a verdict had been reached, whereupon the twelve men were led back into the room.

The foreman handed the slip of paper to the clerk, who in turn, was instructed by the judge to read it. The verdict was:

"We, the jury, find the defendant not guilty."

In spite of warnings from the court a great cheering rent the stillness of the big room. It was plain to see where the sympathy of the great crowd was, in this case. The jury-men were besieged with handshakes and congratulations.

Old Colonel Brewster literally grabbed Roger by both shoulders and turned him around to face him.

"It was great, my boy; it was great! Beginning tomorrow, the firm will be Brewster and Wilson."

Robert Downey had grasped the hands of both the old and younger lawyers, too full for words.

Roger was too overcome with emotion at first, to speak; but the expression on his face plainly told the old attorney what was in his heart and Colonel Brewster was satisfied.

The young attorney was besieged with congratulations and compliments from the older lawyers. He

was much pleased to have all this of course, but the tense strain of the past few hours was telling on him and he wormed his way through the throngs, and down the aisle, for a breath of fresh air; for it is needless to say that the demonstration had induced the judge to declare a short recess.

Roger had progressed about two-thirds of the way toward the open door, twisting and worming his way through the crowd, when his progress was suddenly arrested by a young woman who had stepped out into the aisle. She wore a wide brimmed picture hat that completely hid her face.

Wishing to attract her attention in order that he might pass, Roger was about to speak to her, when his eye fell upon a familiar looking paper held in her hand. For a second he faltered, while a thousand possibilities rushed upon him.

He had glanced these words, a por-

tion of a familiar sentence, written on the paper:

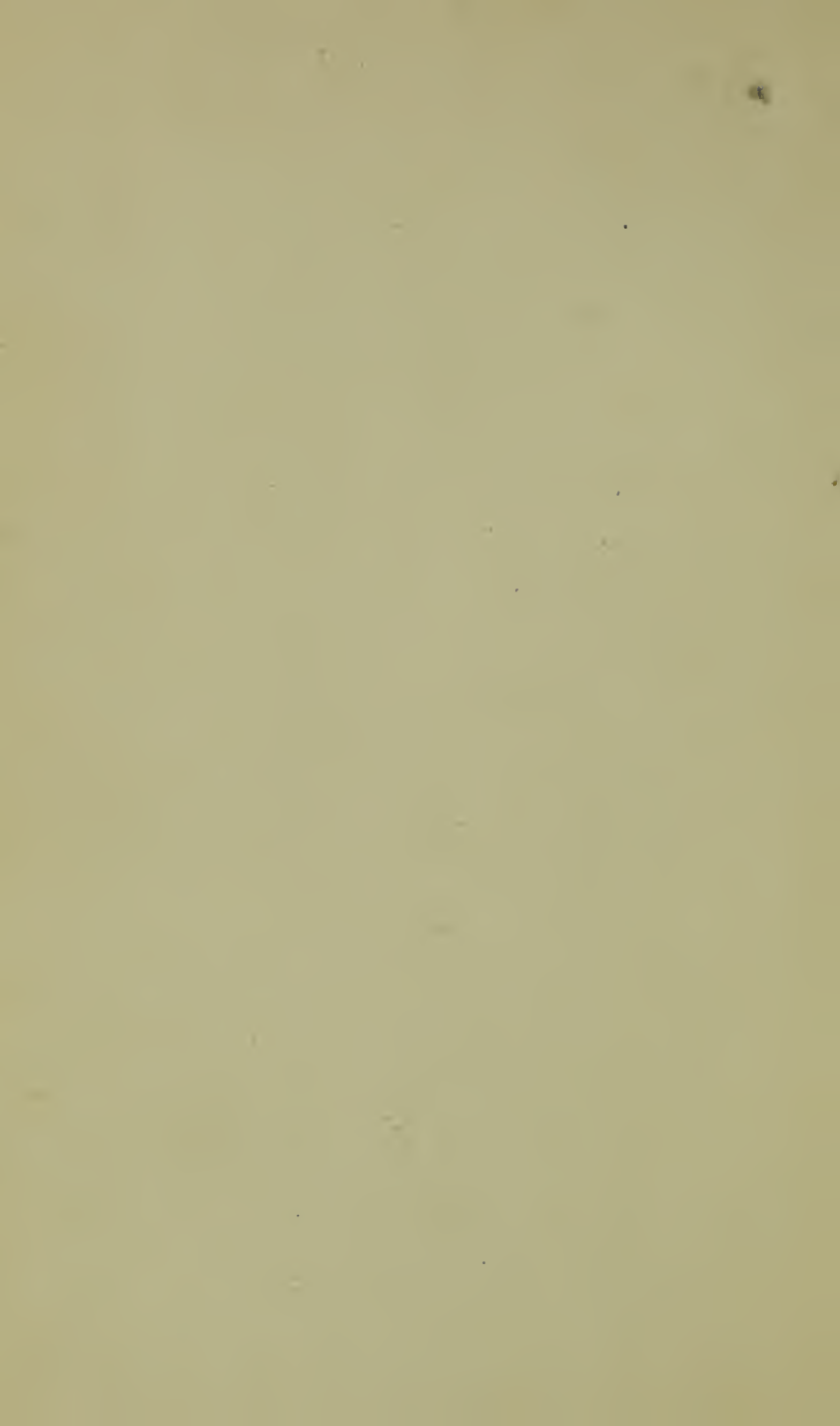
“—explanations be in order, I feel that you must be the one to make them—”

Before the young man could recover his composure, the face of the girl in the picture hat was slowly lifted to his and she was softly saying:

“I have come to make some ex—”

But the balance of the sentence was smothered against the fluttering heart of the young attorney, as he snatched her hungrily to his breast; and for a space too short to calculate, the scene of tumult about them, gave way to the music of rippling waters and the cadence of happy song birds. In that fraction of time, all the past was forgotten; all the bitter misery of two suffering souls, had been paid in full, as he held her close to his heart.

For Dorothy had surrendered and Roger had scored a triple victory!





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